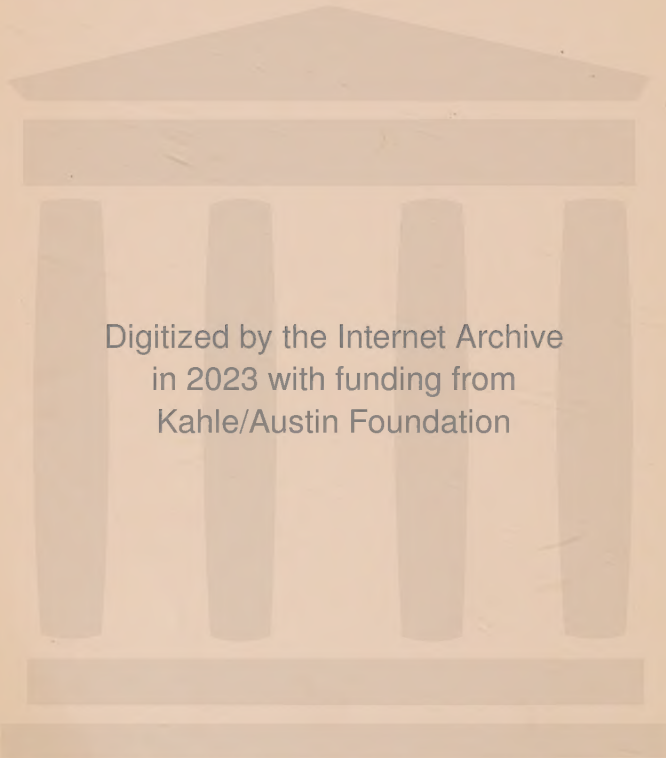


*They still sing of Love*

SIGMUND SPAETH



Sigmond Spaeth



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THEY STILL SING OF LOVE





*They still sing of*  
**LOVE**

.....

*by*  
**SIGMUND SPAETH**

**AUTHOR OF**  
*The Common Sense of Music*  
**ETC.**



**HORACE LIVERIGHT**  
**NEW YORK**

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO ALL THOSE  
WHO ASKED FOR IT, AND TO BILL'S  
MOTHER, WHO DIDN'T HAVE TO.

\*\*\*\*\*



## *Preface*

.....

THE author is not quite convinced of the clamorous demand for the publication of this volume, even though some people, during the past two years, have asked, casually and courteously, "How about another book?" Subconsciously he seems to be influenced by the growing impression that his attitude toward music is completely flippant, and he harks back regretfully at times to a very serious and rather stodgy dissertation on "Milton's Knowledge of Music: Its Sources and Its Significance in His Works," written at Princeton more than twenty years ago.

It is true that the endearing absurdities of America's popular song literature, from the pre-nineties to the ever-present, continue to delight his soul (and, apparently, other souls as well) and he cannot as yet rid himself of this fixation; but these pages are by no means limited to the sentimental subject of their title, and actually go off at all sorts of musical tangents, with occasional outbursts of something perilously close to honest indignation.

The book is divided into three sections, for the convenience of the Great Dippers of the reading public. If you are looking for entertainment and information combined, read the first section; if your object is merely entertainment, take a chance on the second; but if you

are seriously interested in music, and looking for a possible argument, then jump immediately into the final section, which the author fondly but rather anxiously believes to be the best.

The material of this book is not entirely new. Some of it has appeared in such journals as *Harper's*, *The North American Review*, *The New Yorker*, *Life*, *Judge*, *Brentano's Book Chat*, *Plain Talk*, *The Bookman*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, *Masonic Outlook*, *Auction Bridge Magazine*, and the *Detroit A. C. News*, to all of whom grateful acknowledgment is hereby made.

SIGMUND SPAETH

*September, 1929*

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(a)

.....

*Allegro, ma non troppo*

[ NOT TOO SERIOUS ]



I  
THEY STILL SING OF LOVE



# I

## *They Still Sing of Love*

.....

TIN PAN ALLEY has had a lot of rubbish dumped into it from time to time. Right now it is all cluttered up with wisecracks, sallies of subtle salaciousness, and plain dirt.

But under the whole mess of lyrical garbage runs a solid vein of honest and golden sentimentality, which every successful song-writer has tapped sooner or later, with highly advantageous results. There is only one subject that eternally interests the human race, and that subject is LOVE.

Comedy and tragedy have entered into the world's songs. The spirit of daring adventure has found its place; and ribald suggestiveness has not been entirely absent. Put them all together, they spell LOVE. For in practically every lyric narrative, every melodic summary of contemporary thought (or its opposite) the relationship of the sexes has supplied the real motive power. Times may change, and fashions vary, but love goes on forever.

An anonymous poet, writing in "Sentimental Songs

for the Ladies," early in the past century, summed it up with unquestionable truth:

Love is the theme, love is the theme  
Of the minstrel all over the Earth.  
Love is the theme, love is the theme  
Of the minstrel all over the Earth.

List to the light-hearted chanson of France.  
Trace the burthen of German Romance,

Hear the guitar in the sweet orange grove,  
Of what sings the Spaniard, oh, is it not love?

Yes, yes, love is the theme, etc.

List to the song in the camp of the brave,  
Hear the Sailor, the sport of the wave,  
In court or in cottage, wherever you rove,  
Of what sings the minstrel, oh, is it not love?

Yes, yes, love is the theme  
Of the minstrel all over the Earth,  
Love is the theme, love is the theme  
Of the minstrel all over the Earth.

This seems to leave practically no room for argument. So far as variations are concerned, therefore, it all comes down to a mere question of detail.

In colonial days, and for some time afterward, lyric love-making followed a fairly definite formula. The language had to be elaborately metaphorical, and it was considered improper and indelicate to be too



specific about feminine attractions. Fair ladies were decorously swathed in a multiplicity of raiment, and all the reference to their charms had to be similarly disguised.

Elaborately artificial comparisons were drawn with birds, bees, butterflies, and flowers of all kinds, with due attention to the moon and stars, precious stones and the celestial realms in general. Sometimes a bit of mythology was dragged in, to make the meaning more obscure. In such a spirit and of such technique were songs like "I'd be a Butterfly," by Thomas Haynes Bayley, whose title is a fair warning of its substance, and Charles Blamphin's more ambitious "Oh, Would I Were a Bird!" The more familiar "Oh, Had I Wings Like a Dove" is of the same school.

The entire artificial atmosphere of this type of love-song is beautifully summed up in a double-barreled effusion of Edward L. Hime, in which the sighing swain fancies himself in both a vocal and an instrumental rôle:

"Oh, that I were a song, suiting my dear one's choice,  
To live but in her breath, to die but with her voice,  
To ripple o'er her coral lips, to light her deep blue eyes,  
To rise, to fall, to melt away upon her balmy sighs.

"Oh, that I were the lute she to her breast hath ta'en,  
That I unto her heart might whisper forth my pain,

And if that heart be true to me, 'twould such sweet  
 feelings wake,  
 That in one gush of melody, I fear my own would  
 break!"

Characteristic of the same highfalutin style, but with an added touch of romantic narrative, was "Love's Ritornella," popularized in the early days of the American theater by James W. Wallack, in a play called "The Bandit." It seems there was a lovely girl named Zitella (how did the movies overlook that one?) and she was strolling at eve for recreation when she met a gentleman who asked her to stop and listen to "Love's Ritornella." She prudently declined the invitation, having heard that there was a bandit about and she must be getting home, whereupon it developed that this was no gentleman after all, but the bandit himself! A pretty story and worth quoting in the original dialogue:

"Gentle Zitella, whither away?  
 Love's Ritornella list while I play!"  
 "No! I have lingered too long on the road,  
 Night is advancing, the Brigand's abroad;  
 Lonely Zitella hath too much to fear;  
 Love's Ritornella she may not hear."

"Charming Zitella, why shouldst thou care?  
 Night is not darker than thy raven hair,  
 And those bright eyes if the Brigand should see,  
 Thou art the robber, the captive is he;

Gentle Zitella, banish thy fear;  
Love's Ritornella tarry and hear."

"Simple Zitella, beware! oh! beware!  
List ye no ditty, grant ye no prayer!  
To your light footsteps let terror add wings,  
'Tis Massaroni himself who now sings!  
Gentle Zitella, banish thy fear;  
Love's Ritornella tarry and hear."

An atmosphere of polite melancholy was characteristic of many love-songs of this period. Amorous swains were not expected to come right out with a straightforward declaration, which might have ruined everything by leading at once to an engagement and a wedding. Rather was it the style for them to ponder and wonder, to mourn and moan, over fancied coldness and an extremely improbable lack of interest. Evidently it never occurred to them to go straight to headquarters and find out exactly how things stood.

If the lady died before the suitor gathered enough courage to reveal his love, so much the better. This gave him wonderful opportunities to burst into lyric sobs and expatiate on what might have been. "Only a Lock of Hair," "Alice, Where Art Thou?" "She Wept Her Life Away," "Lily Dale," "Amber Lee" and "Bright-Eyed Little Nell of Narragansett Bay" are all songs concerning defunct heroines, and somehow one feels that the circumstances permitted exaggerations of

sentiment which might not otherwise have been possible.

"Ever of Thee," immortalized in "Trelawney of the Wells," belongs to the same category, and so does "Listen to the Mocking Bird," written by Septimus Winner under the pseudonym of "Alice Hawthorne."

Here are a few more suggestive titles of the doleful period: "Under the Willow She's Sleeping," "Why do I Weep for Thee?" "Let the Dead and the Beautiful Rest," "We Parted by the Riverside," "Thou Art so Near and yet so Far," "Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still," "He Never Said He Loved," "Thou Art Gone From My Gaze," "Happy Be Thy Dreams," and "I'll Keep Thee in Remembrance."

The old ballad of "Barbara Allen" tells about a girl who really *was* cruel to her lover, and regretted it later. But it was far easier to fancy a coldness and dwell upon it at melancholy lyric length. One poet expressed it thus:

"I will not ask to press that cheek,  
 Where roses with each other vie,  
 Nor will I in thy glances seek  
 A look might bid me cease to sigh.  
 Nor think because I do not speak  
 Of love to thee that love is less,  
 Oh, why should I my silence break,  
 When words could not my love express?"

Yet though thy bosom still is cold,  
Nor feels nor owns one throb for me,  
Yet thou canst not from me withhold  
The bliss, the bliss of loving thee!"

A song called "Go! Forget Me!" by the Reverend Charles Wolfe, has the unselfish refrain:

"May thy soul with pleasure shine,  
Lasting as the gloom of mine!"

"'Twere Vain to Tell Thee All I Feel" is the way J. Augustus Wade put it, and "Love Not!" warned Mrs. Caroline Norton.

Balfe's familiar "Heart Bowed Down" contains the trenchant lines:

"But memory is the only friend  
That grief can call its own."

"Thou Hast Wounded the Spirit That Loved Thee," "Day and Night I Thought of Thee," "We Never Speak as We Pass by," "With All My Soul Then Let Us Part," "Will You Ever Think of Me, Maud?" "I'm Still a Friend to You," and "Oh No, We Never Mention Her!" are a few more titles from the long catalogue of deliberately disappointed love.

Gradually this doleful school of sentimental song-

.....

writing assumed a more cheerful aspect. By the middle of the nineteenth century it had already become fairly clear that the female of the species was not necessarily a saint, a goddess or a disembodied spirit, but a human being like her male admirers. While she still wore a superabundance of clothing, there was the dainty revelation of pantalettes, while evening gowns permitted more than a glimpse of bare shoulders and arms. Flirtation began to be considered in its rightful place as a science, and its technical details appeared with increasing boldness in the love-songs of the day.

Thus we had "Love among the Roses," a favorite in the Delehanty-Hengler repertoire, "A Starry Night for a Ramble," "Sparkling on a Sunday Night," various descriptions of the time and place for congenial souls to start an acquaintance, such as "Riding on a Street Car," "On the Beach at Cape May" (or Long Branch, or Brighton, or Newport, as the case might be), "Twilight in the Park," "Flirting on the Ice," etc. Details of costume assumed increasing importance, as in "Jockey Hat and Feather," "Tassels on the Boots" and "The Dark Girl Dressed in Blue," and eventually the love-song-writers came out boldly for osculation in "Kiss Me Quick and Go," "Kissing on the Sly" and "Kissing at the Gate," all forerunners of Victor Herbert's "Kiss Me Again" and "A Kiss in the Dark." A few lines of quotations are sufficient:



Those Tassels on her Boots,  
A style I'm sure that suits  
Yankee girls with hair in curls,  
Those Tassels on her Boots.

---

His manly whisker swept her cheek,  
She uttered no reply,  
How could she part her lips to speak  
While kissing on the sly?

The maiden meek one kiss received,  
Demurely winked her eye,  
And with the air of one bereaved,  
She heaved a hearty sigh;

---

Again that wayward whisker pressed  
Her cheek, she breathed, "Oh, my!  
How grateful to the burdened breast,  
This kissing on the sly!"

The vogue of giving a song a girl's name began early and has never really ended. Simple names have been most popular, with "Maggie," "Nellie," "Mary," and their near relatives doing duty over and over again as pegs for plaintive passion, but some high-sounding ones like "Inez Rovina" were dragged in occasionally.

By the early nineties, name-songs were all the rage, and "Annie Rooney," "Rosie O'Grady," "Sweet Marie," and "Daisy Bell" still survive. The last named is better known by its closing phrase, "A Bicycle Built for Two,"

which brings back memories of the days when girls in natty bloomers, shirtwaists, and tam-o'-shanters, rode through the countryside on "tandems," with their willing suitors doing most of the pedaling.

It was in the nineties also that the "coon song" came into its own. There had been early suggestions of this type in such titles as "Coal Black Rose," "Lubly Dine" and "Louisiana Belle," but with Barney Fagan's "My Gal Is a High-Born Lady" the new spirit of rag-time and the cake-walk made itself felt, and it has continued to exert its influence right up to the "Blues" and the "Mamma-Papa" school of the present day. Some of the negroid love-songs of the end of the past century were distinctly beautiful, particularly the two outstanding "Lou" songs, "Mah Lady Lou" and "Lou, Lou, I Love you," "Lindy," with its near relative "O Melindy," and "Pretty Little Dinah," a preliminary to the modern "Dinah." Of a more general nature, but distinctly in the "coon song" tradition, were "Some of These Days" ("You'll miss yo' Honey") and "Shine on, Harvest Moon" ("On me and my gal") which are still played and sung.

With the increasing acceptance of colored ideals in love-making there entered a whole cycle of dance-songs, directly or indirectly addressed to the girl of immediate propinquity. "My Creole Belle" was one of the earliest, and later we had the "Cubanola Glide," "Grizzly Bear,"

.....  
 "Turkey Trot" ("Everybody's Doing It") and "Bunny Hug," all precursors of the current fox-trot.

To-day the dark cloud still rests heavily upon the popular music, but with a silver lining of sophistication which makes the songs laugh at their own absurdities. We have had our "Hard-hearted Hannahs," our "Lulus" and their male counterparts, including even a touch of radio in "Loud-speakin' Poppa," and if the sentiments of these lyrics were coldly analyzed, their fundamental vulgarity might prove rather appalling. But crudities and indelicate allusions have become so commonplace in the theater and even in daily conversation that they are no longer taken seriously.

The chief demand of the modern popular song is that it be smart and snappy. The lyric-writers have progressed many miles beyond their brethren of the past century in the command of trick rhymes, unusual meters and clever wording. Their texts are generally flippant, with a nonchalance that covers but cannot quite conceal an undercurrent of sincere sentiment. "The Girl Friend," "The Man I Love" and "Thou Swell" are all of this class.

There is whimsicality and honest sentiment as well in the charmingly melodious "My Heart Stood Still," which, like "Thou Swell," adorned the score of "The Connecticut Yankee":

I took one look at you,  
 That's all I meant to do,

And then my heart stood still.  
My feet could step and walk,  
My lips could move and talk,  
And yet my heart stood still.

More slangy, but in the same modern spirit was that song whose leading question, "Ain't she sweet?" was introduced by the syncopated rhythm of "Now I ask you very confidentially."

The jazz mood enters definitely into the irresponsibilities of such lyrics as the following, although the idea itself goes back to the garden of Eden:

"I'm tellin' the birds, tellin' the bees,  
Tellin' the flowers, tellin' the trees  
How I love you!  
I'm tellin' the moon, tellin' the sun,  
Tellin' the stars, tellin' each one  
How I love you!"

There is even a gesture toward old-fashioned grammar in the line "Oh, gee, I'd hate to hate you like I love you," and a touch of traditional assurance in the couplet, "Why do we two keep on wasting time? Oh, Cecelia, say that you'll be mine." It would be impossible to claim much inspiration for such a thought as this recent one:

"Baby Face, I'm up in Heav'n,  
When I'm in your fond embrace,  
I didn't need a shove,  
'Cause I just fell in love  
With your pretty Baby Face."

And just when we thought we were all through with that great sob-school that found its climax in "You Made Me What I Am To-day" and "I'm Sorry I Made You Cry," along comes this tag to a popular chorus:

"You made me love you, you made me sigh,  
And yet it made you happy when you made me cry."

Yet there have been some sincere and simple love-lyrics in the modern popular music. Stoddard King created one in "The Long, Long Trail," which first won the Yale Poetry Prize and then did more than its bit in the World War. Eugene Lockhart produced another in "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise," which seems destined to a long life.

All of the newer popular songs are not necessarily vulgar or salacious or ultra-sophisticated or even jazzy. In many cases they point the way to respectable domesticity, as where we are told with mathematical exactness:

"Just Mollie and me,  
And Baby makes three,  
We're happy in my blue heaven."

(The suggestion for this successful song, incidentally, seems to have come from one of the broadest of German bedroom lyrics, "Blaues Himmelbett," which

.....  
first appeared in a censored American version as "My Little Nest of Heavenly Blue.")

As a final reminder of the permanence of sentimentality, we have the up-to-date ballads of Irving Berlin, clearly a throw-back to the early nineties. Mr. Berlin is not in any sense a jazz artist. (Who started the absurd newspaper story that he wrote rag-time because his mother had an uneven heart-action?) He is a tear-squeezer, a mush-sweetener, a spoon-dripper of the most orthodox type. He wrote "Alexander's Rag-Time Band" (which was not really rag-time at all) and a few artificially jazzy pieces, but all of his greatest successes were heart-songs, pure and simple, ranging from the casual "What'll I Do?" to "Remember," "Always," and "Because I Love You."

These cross-sections of conventional sentimentality have been far bigger sellers than the tricky, self-conscious, wisecracking ephemerality of Broadway. They are the Q. E. D. to the eternal proposition that "love is for aye," and at the moment there seems no good and sufficient reason for trying to swerve the lyrically articulate human race from this firm and admirable intention.

II

“SO LONG AS WE MAKE THE SONGS”





## II

### *"So Long as We Make the Songs"*

.....

AMERICA'S carelessness in the making and breaking of laws is known and admitted. But this doesn't hold a candle to the carelessness of our song-writing habits.

From the very outset it has been an American tradition that a popular song must not be too grammatical, nor too strict in applying the rules of rhyme and meter. It has been recognized that only a few subjects are worthy of lyrical treatment, the most important being love, the moon, animals, children, dancing, seduction and a girl's name.

Politics and patriotism were vital subjects for the song-writers of our pioneer days, but not for long after about 1860. It required the enthusiasm of Revolutionary days to create such a lyric as Robert Paine's "Adams and Liberty," which had the same tune as "The Star-Spangled Banner." (It is not generally realized that this was originally a drinking-song, "To Anacreon in Heaven," in which each stanza ended with a definite

.....  
injunction to "entwine the myrtle of Venus with Bacchus's vine.")

Paine was disinherited for marrying an actress, and his general reputation was none too good. But he was paid \$750 for the words of "Adams and Liberty," and this was a record price almost to the days of Irving Berlin. Each stanza of this patriotic outburst ended with the couplet:

"For ne'er shall the sons of Columbia be slaves,  
While the earth bears a plant, or the sea rolls a wave."

Among other snappy lines was one, "to increase the legitimate powers of the ocean," which had nothing to do with the twelve-mile limit, and "while France her huge limbs bathes, recumbent in blood," which was neither polite nor true, according to "La Vie Parisienne," and finally "our realm fears no shock but the earth's own explosion," which foretold equally the San Francisco earthquake and the subways of New York.

Joseph Warren, a clergyman whose sword was mightier than his pen, got the Rotarians of the day all excited by fitting "Free America" to the tune of "The British Grenadiers." The big line of his first stanza was "Oppose, oppose, oppose, oppose, for North America" (rhyming with "sway"). In later stanzas this became "Huzza, huzza, huzza, huzza, for free America" (rhyming with "day," "prey" and "betray"). In the sixth stanza he reached a climax with "And fight and shout

and shout and fight" and finally hit on "The sons, the sons, the sons, the sons of brave America" (rhyming with "obey").

Sentimentality, however, soon entered the song-writing field and has kept a stranglehold on it ever since. Some of the earliest sentimental songs concerned themselves with such estimable objects as "Wife, Children and Friends" and many a bumper was drained to this triumvirate. Then there was "Woodman, Spare That Tree," a sure-fire eye-moistener for the nature-hounds.

Sentimentality often took the form of self-pity, and this has remained a popular emotion to the present day. "Do They Miss Me at Home?" was an early title, with "No" as the logical answer. "Nobody's Darling" was followed by "They Say I Am Nobody's Darling," and so it went on.

The martyr complex was applied in its most virulent form to children, or "the kiddies," as they are called to-day. "Put me in my little bed," was merely a blind for lugubrious thoughts on premature death, and with Little Nell and Little Eva running amuck in fiction, the number of infant angels careening to Heaven at the approved angle became positively scandalous. A racial note was introduced when Thurland Chattaway wrote "Little Black Me," which expressed the pathetic hope that the angels wouldn't notice the little pickaninny's color.

The climax of this entire cult, however, came in a monstrosity called "Only Me," which for many years held the record for the hundred-yard balderdash. It concerned two little girls, one of whom, "Marie," was her mother's pet, and the whole terrible story was summed up in the cosmic lines:

"One got the kisses and kindly words,  
That was her pet, Marie,  
One told her troubles to bees and birds,  
That one was only me!"

Death, as such, has always been a favorite subject with our song-writers, and the extreme age or extreme youth of the victim automatically increased the proportions of the maudlin orgy. It is not generally realized that "Listen to the Mocking-Bird" is not a whistling solo, but a lament over the deceased "Hally," who lies under a weeping willow-tree.

H. P. Danks, in addition to "Silver Threads Among the Gold," was responsible for "Allie Darling," similarly reminiscent, with each stanza ending ungrammatically but sincerely in some such sentiment as "Allie dear, for you and I." Most of the other songs that used feminine names for titles managed to kill off their heroines somehow.

The seduction school had a great vogue through the nineties and flourished right up to the time of the "papa and mamma" sophistication, with "The Curse of

an Aching Heart" ("You made me what I am to-day") its last great representative. Before that, however, we had had "A Bird in a Gilded Cage," "More to Be Pitied than Censured," "Just Tell Them that You Saw Me," "Take Back Your Gold," "The Mansion of Aching Hearts" and hundreds of others, including one gorgeous parody, "Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl."

There have been plenty of other subdivisions of song-literature in the development of rhythmic real estate; coon songs (degenerating into "mammy" songs), geographical songs (in which the desire is expressed to go almost anywhere else than where one is at the time), transportation songs (automobile, airplane, train or steamboat), "blues" and simple "you" songs, all of which have contributed liberally to the slush-fund of the American public. And when you listen to-day to "I Wanna Be Loved by You," "You're the Cream in My Coffee," or "Don't Be Like That," you realize that we are not suffering as yet from any highly rarefied cultural atmosphere.



III  
BACK TO THE BIRDS





### III

#### *Back to the Birds*



THE history of human nature is written in song. All the ideals, the sentiments, the troubles and the triumphs of mankind eventually find their way to musical expression, and, to be completely articulate, this expression must be vocal.

Every generation has had its pet songs, but the underlying thought has remained curiously constant. Individual ditties may show particular characteristics of their time, but in the long run, the subject matter is very much the same.

The singers of the world early formed the habit of going directly to the birds for inspiration. Even though most bird-song is not musical in the strict sense of the word, the spontaneous character of this natural warbling has always filled people with an intense desire to go and do likewise.

The simplest of all musical patterns is the cuckoo call, and its two tones have not only formed the basis of a vast number of "cuckoo" songs, but also supply a "come hither whistle" for the whole world, the "Yoo-

hoo" that calls the kid next door, or the friend on the street, or the taxicab, as the case may be. The unpretentious cuckoo-call is likewise the foundation for a multitude of tunes, such as the "Japanese Sandman," "Carolina in the Morning," "Toot-Toot-Tootsie," and "'S Wonderful."

Outside of the cuckoo's call, no bird-song has been much imitated, with the possible exception of the quail's. There was once an operetta called "Miss Bob White," with decided emphasis on the notes of the bird itself, and later came "Woodland," whose entire cast appeared in feathers, and containing among other bird-numbers, the seductive "Tale of the Turtle Dove." (Grand opera took a fling at ornithology through Maeterlinck's "Blue Bird," and the legitimate stage developed "Chantecler," a barnyard comedy.)

For some reason it has always been assumed that birds knew more than human beings. "A little bird told me" is still the most irritating of answers, and when the photographer tells you to "watch the birdie" he presumably introduces you to infinite mysteries. (Wagner's Siegfried learned some splendid secrets from the "forest bird," whose song became intelligible only after the hero had accidentally touched his tongue with dragon's blood.)

Bird-songs have been a necessary part of every civilization, no matter how primitive. The most familiar of German folk-songs tells of a flying bird, and French

literature is full of "Le Petit Oiseau." Similarly we have the thrush or "throstle" in old English lore; there is a Bohemian "Birds' Courting," and Russian song deals frequently with the nightingale. (The stock imitation of this mysterious bird consists of an ordinary water-whistle, and this hardly comes under the head of music.)

"Listen to the Mocking Bird," is by no means as cheerful a piece as the tune would suggest, dealing chiefly with graves and weeping-willows. But the sprightly skylark received proper attention through the combined efforts of Shakespeare and Franz Schubert.

The owl has had occasional lyric treatment, particularly in the stock story of its voyage with the pussy-cat and the eternal question summed up in the classic "The Owl Said 'Who? Who?'" But for some reason the far more talkative parrot has been neglected.

The sentimental nineties gave the human equation to bird-lore, as to everything else. "A Bird in a Gilded Cage" became a traditional warning against the lure of wealth, and before that Paul Dresser's "The Convict and the Bird" also pointed a moral lesson. Later came the more fanciful and light-hearted "Bird on Nellie's Hat."

Abt's "When the Swallows Homeward Fly" was one of the great parlor duets of the antimacassar period, whose modern version is found in the jazz "Follow the Swallow Back Home." With this song a revival of lyric

bird-mania set in which has already given us "Bye, Bye, Blackbird," "Hello, Bluebird," "The Red, Red, Robin" and several others.

There is something about the feathered songsters peculiarly fascinating to human nature, and the canary is still a few flaps ahead of the gold-fish as a household pet. The college campus will continue to hear the cuckoo-call of the wild student, bluebirds will continue to spell happiness, while ravens croak "Nevermore," and the trap-drummer of the universal orchestra will keep right on bringing out his little old tin nightingale every time lovers meet by moonlight, on the screen or in actual life. For the original singers of creation are responsible for the most deep-rooted song habits of all the world.

IV  
AMERICA'S SONGS OF TRAVEL



#### IV

### *America's Songs of Travel*

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THE Wanderlust which seems to be an indispensable factor in human nature has figured extensively in the song literature of America. In every period of our history there seems to have been some lyric suggestion of the pregnant thought that it would be pleasant to be somewhere else than one was.

Travel, adventure, the excitement of mere freedom from routine, all these are factors in the consistent enthusiasm for songs which insist that their interpreters are absolutely determined to change their habitation for almost any fascinating spot on the map.

Among the earliest American tunes, "The Arkansas Traveller" and "Zip Coon" both celebrated a sturdy independence of all geographical consistency, and they are still among the pet numbers in the repertoire of every country fiddler. "Zip Coon" (which later became "Turkey in the Straw") contains a reference to the battle of New Orleans, and probably dates back even earlier than 1815. The picture on its original cover indicates

that the Charleston was by no means an unknown art, even in those days.

About the middle of the century it became fashionable to localize sentimentality, particularly in the various quarters of New York City, which was then, as now, a melting-pot of emotions as well as races. "Walking down Broadway" was a mild expression of this tendency, with a little more daring in the sequel, "Strolling on the Brooklyn Bridge." (Traffic did not interfere much with outdoor courting in those days.) Central Park figured in a number of songs, which reached a climax of devilishness in "Flirting on the Ice" and "Twilight in the Park."

Meanwhile the path of minstrelsy was moving westward and America discovered more and more places where her citizens wanted to be. That forthright ballad of the late forties, "Frankie and Johnnie," sent its heroine all the way from St. Louis to Memphis to "get her man a hundred-dollar suit of clothes." Another protagonist of the underworld, "Willie, the Weeper," traveled extensively, in dreams as well as in reality.

The greatest of railroad songs, of course, is "Casey Jones," and, while it was not published until the twentieth century, it undoubtedly rests upon ancient origins. Two actual railroad men of the Pacific Coast, Newton and Seibert, put it into its final form, but it is said that the vaudeville team of the Leightons had it even earlier and they took it from authentic folk sources. These same



Leightons wrote "Steamboat Bill," which glorified the river pilots as worthily as "Casey Jones" did the engineers. "The Wreck of the Old 97" was a later imitation of "Casey Jones," and the Mississippi saga received modern additions in such songs as "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee," "All Aboard for Dixie," etc. ("Stackolee," which was the actual name of one of the Mississippi steamers, represented another hard-fighting and quick-shooting gentleman of the St. Louis of "Frankie and Johnnie," also celebrated in a song of the period.)

In later days, distance gradually lent enchantment to the travel songs of America. The South continued to exercise its peculiar fascination, and "When that Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for Alabam'" had many relatives, including "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans," "Carolina in the Morning" and "My Home in Tennessee" (now best known through its parody, "The Tattooed Lady").

"My Old New Hampshire Home" did its bit for New England, and "Down on the Farm" rhymed "Wish Again" with "Michigan." California and Florida, of course, have had their full quota of up-to-date songs. Then there was "Back, Back, Back to Baltimore," "Put Me Off at Buffalo" and "It's Fourteen Miles from Schenectady to Troy."

The Oriental School has had a great vogue, starting early in the nineties with the "Streets of Cairo" (best known as the "Hoochie-Coochie") and still running

rampant and exotic, with "Moonlight on the Ganges" its most harmonious contribution. "Egypt, My Cleopatra," "My Little Lassa Maid," "Under the Bamboo Tree," "In the Shade of the Sheltering Palms," "The Beach at Waikiki," and "The Sheik of Araby" are only a few out of the same great show-window of the lyric travel-bureau.

"It's Moving Day Way Down in Jungletown" referred specifically to the scattering of animals on the approach of Theodore Roosevelt, but its significance applies to human nature as well. Mankind does not like to stay put too long in one place, and if we cannot actually visit all the corners of the world, we like at least to sing about them.

v

TOPICAL SONGS, OLD AND NEW



V

*Topical Songs, Old and New*



“WHEN all else fails, try a topical song,” is an old adage of musical comedy. No, not tropical. The South Sea Islands have done their full duty by this time. “Topical” is the word, meaning a song to which unlimited verses can be written, introducing the topics of the day and commenting wittily upon things of local and timely interest.

In truth, such a song has often “saved the show,” although recently, with the glorification of the American girl, the wealth of scenic splendor, the honestly charming music and the occasionally funny comedians, no desperate methods have been needed. The last significant example was probably “Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean,” which not only made its interpreters wealthy, but still forms the stock basis for amateur parody.

“It Ain’t Gonna Rain No More” and “Show Me the Way to Go Home” both have the earmarks of the topical song, and both are direct descendants of “Hinky Dee,” a most prolific parent of parody. The Italian “O Sole Mio” has been distorted into a vaudeville mon-

strosity of the topical type, and "Liza Jane" contains similar possibilities.

But the new generation scarcely knows what a topical song meant in the old days. When Tony Pastor sang "The Cat Came Back," at his own theater, the verses were changed nightly, with a completely new schedule each week, so that any one unwilling or unable to read a newspaper could pick up most of the events of the day by merely dropping in on this song from time to time.

"Ta-ra-ra boom de-ré" (*sic*, but commonly spelled "Ta-ra-ra-ra boom dee-ay") had a similar run of popularity, somewhat earlier, and in the days of Hoyt's "Trip to Chinatown" (containing also "The Bowery" and "After the Ball") the hard-boiled "Do, Do, My Huckleberry, Do" easily established its topical nature.

One of the early German operettas (was it by Strauss, Von Suppe or Millocker?) contained an effective topical song, "These Things No Schiller Wrote," with Schiller becoming Shakespeare in the English version. "The Dotlet on the Eye," from "Prince Methusalem," and "When Sick Men Are Ailing," from "Fatinitz," belong to the same school.

Gilbert and Sullivan contributed several forms for unlimited topical verses, notably the Lord High Executioner's "little list." The Mikado himself, in "Let the punishment fit the crime," provided material for the verse-writers of the eighties and nineties.

"Starlight," in Victor Herbert's "Wizard of the Nile," was a great topical song in its day, and two other standbys were "You Must Ask of the Man in the Moon" and "Read Your Answer in the Stars."

In most of the old productions it was understood that at least one and perhaps two songs should be built up in topical style, and sometimes the decision was not made until the reactions of the audience had begun to be felt.

That great black-face comedian, Lew Dockstader, depended largely on local material to make his hearers riotous, and people often wondered how he acquired his surprising familiarity with names and conditions wherever he played. The answer was that Dockstader had a regular system of advance information on all his tours, often employing resident jokesmiths and song-writers to supply him with sure-fire lines, some of which were actually submitted to him in verse form.

It was in this capacity that John P. Wilson, one of the oldest living topical song specialists, was associated with Dockstader. Wilson's home at that time was in San Francisco, and he had made a national reputation by writing the words of May Irwin's "Bully Song," the father of all rag-time (although credit was wrongly given for some time to Charles E. Trevathan, a sports writer).

When Lew Dockstader appeared for three weeks

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at the San Francisco Orpheum Theater, he made a feature of his own song, "I'm a Natural Born Joker," for which Wilson supplied some successful local verses. During the same engagement, the popular minstrel introduced a parody of "A Hot Time in the Old Town To-night," which Josephine Sable was singing "straight" on the same bill. The actress was at first inclined to resent the liberty, but soon joined in the laughter over the burlesque of her own mannerisms.

Wilson made the biggest hit of his career with a short-lived verse about a California stage-robber, Chris Evans. This man, whose chief marks of identification were an artificial arm and a flaming red beard, had escaped from jail and was hiding in the hills. His pursuers were once so hot upon his trail that he was forced to leave his artificial arm in a cabin, where he had unstrapped it, and the trophy was proudly brought back and placed on exhibition at the Midwinter Fair.

Ferris Hartman was singing a topical song at the Tivoli Opera House combining "Down Went McGinty" with "After the Fair" (one of the numerous parodies of "After the Ball"). Wilson immediately gave him the following verse, which sent the audience into paroxysms of laughter:

"Chris Evans' artificial arm is seen upon the ground;  
To capture him in sections was the only scheme they  
found.



Next week they say his other arm will be exposed to  
view,  
And then they'll get his whiskers, and perhaps a leg  
or two."

Unfortunately Evans was captured three days later,  
and the topical verse suffered premature execution.

Another of Wilson's masterpieces was "The Simple  
Life for Me," in the musical comedy "The Press Agent,"  
sung by Peter F. Dailey, and used by him in his vaude-  
ville act, "Nearly a Hero," right up to the time of his  
death. In this song "high society" was ridiculed in no  
uncertain terms, as follows:

I dreamed that all our millionaires were leading simple  
lives,  
And in this strange dream, the Newport bunch were  
living with their wives;  
Another mate was out of date.  
Great William Waldorf Astor was no more an English  
swell,  
But was working as a waiter in his big uptown hotel,  
"Draw one!" cried he, and "scramble three!"  
Dick Canfield, of the peachblow vase, who'd just con-  
fessed his guilt,  
Was living in a simple cell, that Reggie Vanderbilt;  
They played the same old simple game.

( *Refrain* )

Simple, simple life upon the brain;  
August Belmont ran a subway train.  
All was love and sweet simplicity;

And Hetty Green too felt the rage,  
Was keeping house for Russell Sage;  
Life was simply heavenly!  
(Well, anyway, the audience laughed!)

When Gilbert and Sullivan's "Patience" was put on at the Tivoli, San Francisco's parodist gave Bunthorne a political verse, referring to Governor Flower of New York and to James H. Budd, the Democratic candidate for the California governorship.

Budd's election, almost unique in a consistently Republican State, was credited by many to the popularity of this innocent verse, which ran:

"There's a Flower in New York,  
That is their Governor's name;  
Let it be understood, ours is only a Budd,  
But he'll blossom out just the same."

Another political twist was inserted by Wilson in the parody of "Every Rose Must Have Its Thorn" in "Wang," when he pictures the parade of the victorious G. O. P., ending:

"Neath that banner stalks Mark Hanna,  
Every rose must have its thorn."

But his most popular topical contribution was to the song called "Fairy Tales," in "The Idol's Eye," by Harry B. Smith and Victor Herbert. There were so

many recalls for this number that it became customary to pin typed copies of the extra verses to the "leg-drops," so that the principals could refresh their memories and keep the order straight as they came on and off.

Those days are past, and no producer to-day would permit his show to be held up in such fashion. Perhaps it is just as well, for the topical song strictly belongs in the home circle and on the amateur stage. There is a lingering echo in the rapid-fire comedian who "makes up words" on the spur of the moment, but in general the topical song has been forced out of sight and hearing by more elaborate and less intimate devices.

Drop a tear for its passing, all ye who remember!



VI

BARBER-SHOP BALLADRY



## VI

### *Barber-Shop Balladry*

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THE man who has not harmonized, or tried to, whether a whiskey tenor or a growling bass, or the full-throated leading on the air, is fit for gout, dyspepsia or a jail.

That's not exactly the way Shakespeare put it, but you get the idea. "That barber-shop chord" has created more goodwill and cemented more friendships than all the signed agreements in the world. Misunderstandings have been dispelled and rancors eliminated in advance by that mystic union of musical parts which Browning idealized poetically as "not a fourth tone, but a star."

It was assumed at one time that men would sing freely only when their natural self-consciousness had been removed by artificial stimulants. To-day, when such stimulation is theoretically impossible, mankind still sings "close harmony," getting a kick out of the music itself when all other springs have dried up.

You have heard them plenty of times in the course of a convention, on the back porch of a summer's evening, or in a secluded corner of a boat-deck, or

around a lamp-post late at night, and perhaps, at their best, in the privacy of the fraternal shower-baths, for there is nothing like a good bathroom to bring out the range and resonance of the lusty male voice. Whether it is the sense of privacy and unlikely interruption, or the actual amplification produced by tiling, marble and enamel, the fact remains that the bathroom school of vocal music has a significance all its own.

"Sweet Adeline," "Workin' on the Railroad," "In the Evening by the Moonlight," "How Dry I Am," "And She Lives Down in Our Alley"—it matters little what the sentiment may be, so long as the words and melody are fairly familiar and the chances for a "Hold it!" sufficiently frequent. It is at such lingering moments that the most poignant effects are produced.

Just why such harmony should be called "barber-shop" is an open question. Scholars have proved that all the way back in Shakespeare's time the barber-shops of Elizabethan England were equipped with musical instruments for the ruffed and ready gentlemen who might be waiting for the latest thing in a Francis Bacon bob. But the madrigals of that day were rather different from the "close harmony" of the modern quartet. They required the ability to read notes and to stick to a difficult part in the midst of a kaleidoscope of counter-point.

A better explanation comes from Jacksonville, Florida, where the barber-shops were all originally



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manned by colored barbers, with each shop naturally developing its own quartet. These negro singers harmonized by ear, and they took more delight in the discovery of a new chord than a whole day's tips could produce. It was through experimentation and the tentative expression of common instincts that the modern art was developed.

The typical "barber-shop ending" is achieved when the leading voice in a quartet hangs on to one tone with dogged determination while the other three voices move around it, usually a half-tone at a time, the closer the better. There are also characteristic "swipes" and "minors" to enliven the progress of such a song.

Many ultra-modern effects are gradually stealing into the art of barber-shop balladry, and who will deny their inherent appeal? The best of them are secured by simply letting all four voices move in parallel lines, which is against all the traditional rules of harmony, but pleasing to the ear, nevertheless. You will hear such harmonizing in the up-to-date phonograph records, made by such quartets as the Revellers or Merry-makers (originally the famous Shannon Four). From the lowly search for simple chords to such orchestral skill is a long step but by no means an impossible one.

The male quartet is still the surest source of entertainment on the vaudeville stage or in the theaters and motion picture houses of America. But it is in-

evitably the amateur who gets the most fun out of "close harmony." There are plenty of people who would not dare to trust their voices in a solo (and rightly) but who sound perfectly splendid when they mingle them with at least three others, the more the merrier. In the average organization, a "quartet" means anything from two harmonizers and a "lead" to a full-sized glee club. The bigger the crowd, the less the individual vocal quality matters.

There is an old story about a German singing teacher who was trying desperately but in vain to get a feminine pupil to sing in tune. Finally he threw up his hands in despair, crying, "Young lady, I play for you the white keys and I play for you the black keys. But always you sing in the cracks."

Such pessimism is not necessary when "good fellows get together," even though the "stein on the table" contains nothing more harmful than ginger ale. In the common expression of a musical enthusiasm, all minor defects are swallowed up, and the result is actually akin to beauty itself. But music has a social as well as an artistic significance, and it is to the social side that the practice of barber-shop harmony contributes most decidedly.

VII  
FIFTY YEARS OF POPULAR SONG



## VII

### *Fifty Years of Popular Song*

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THE history of a country is written in its popular songs. From time immemorial, current events have found lyric expression through the people's self-appointed troubadours, and such vocal outbursts have often had a real significance in reflecting the spirit, the atmosphere, the customs, the manners and the morals of their day.

Folk-music began with the simple necessity of accompanying manual labor with rhythmical music, but the monotonous burden of the communal workers was invariably enlivened by the individual contribution of some gifted soloist, who sang of his own exploits or those of others, as fancy dictated, and thus created first the ballad and eventually epic poetry.

The annual folk-song festival in Italy has similarly produced many lyric celebrations of current events, including that popular song, "Funiculi Funicula," which marked the completion of the funicular railway up Mt. Vesuvius. (There is a hint in this for some of the lovers of good roads in America.)

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Our own recent popular song literature has done its full share in perpetuating the news of the day. We had a vast number of songs about Lindbergh, when he flew the Atlantic, most of them fortunately unpublished. Miss Ederle's swimming of the English Channel was only partly immortalized in a song called "Trudy." Recent vocal obituaries have included such widely different characters as Valentino, William Jennings Bryan, Floyd Collins, the cave man, and Gerald Chapman, the bandit. It may be remembered that a great tenor's death inspired a ballad with the amazing title "They Needed a Song-Bird in Heaven, so God Took Caruso Away."

The Mississippi flood, the wreck of the "Shenandoah," the San Francisco fire and the loss of the Titanic are among the national tragedies and disasters that have found their way into the literature of popular song.

It is therefore permissible, and even necessary, to take this literature quite seriously, as a source of racial information, in spite of its obvious absurdities, its often vulgar lack of taste, and its inherently maudlin sentimentality. Even a brief review of the past half century of popular song in America brings to light a mass of significant material.

The period of the late seventies and early eighties was consecrated in its popular music chiefly to those twin gods of minstrelsy, Harrigan and Hart. Between

them they built up a tradition which still influences the technique of musical comedy, minstrel shows and vaudeville, particularly as reflected in the work of the song and dance man, whose experience, according to no less an authority than George Cohan, is absolutely essential to the making of a great American actor.

Ed Harrigan and Tony Hart were an ideal team, interpreting chiefly their own material, whether Irish, negro or in the highfalutin English style, but almost always on the solid basis of popular satire.

That famous Harrigan and Hart song, "The Mulligan Guard," practically broke up the pseudo-military organizations which had sprung into existence after the close of the Civil War, and had already developed into a serious political and social menace. What the strong-armed authority of the law failed to accomplish, two popular comedians achieved by the well-aimed shafts of ridicule.

Another great Harrigan and Hart song was called "The Babies on Our Block," a clear forerunner of "The Sidewalks of New York," which only recently relinquished its political significance. Here are a few lines from the early Irish epic of New York childhood:

If you want for information, Or in need of merriment,  
Come over with me socially To Murphy's tenement;  
He owns a row of houses In the First Ward, near the  
dock,

Where Ireland's represented By the Babies on our Block.

There's the Phalens and the Whalens From the Sweet  
Dunochadee,

They are sitting on the railings With their children on  
their knee,

All gossiping and talking With their neighbors in a  
flock,

Singing, "Little Sally Waters," With the Babies on our  
Block.

Oh, Little Sally Waters, Sitting in the sun,

A-crying and weeping for a young man;

Oh, rise, Sally, rise, Wipe your eye out with your frock;

That's sung by the Babies a-living on our Block.

Of a warm day in the summer, When the breeze blows  
off the sea

A hundred thousand children Lay on the Battery;

They come from Murphy's building, Oh, their noise  
would stop a clock!

Oh there's no perambulatory, With the Babies on our  
Block.

There's the Clearys and the Learys From the sweet  
Black Water side,

They are laying on the Battery And they're gazing at  
the tide;

All royal blood and noble, All of Dan O'Connell's stock,

Singing, "Gravel, Greeny Gravel," With the Babies on  
our Block.

Oh, Gravel, Greeny Gravel, How green the grasses grow,  
For all the pretty fair young maidens that I see;

Oh, Green Gravel Green, Wipe your eye out with your  
frock;

That's sung by the Babies a-living on our Block.



It is not generally known that John Philip Sousa was writing popular songs for Carncross and Dixey's minstrels, in Philadelphia, as early as 1877, while playing first violin in a theater orchestra. One specimen has been preserved, with the intriguing title, "The Free Lunch Cadets," and a terrific picture of that informal organization on its cover. It followed the Harrigan and Hart style of the day, but displayed in its music some of that relentless six-eight time to which Mr. Sousa was later to set millions marching.

The sentimental songs of the late seventies (and sentimentality has always been with us an outstanding national habit) concerned themselves largely with geographical accuracy as to the places where love-making could find its best opportunities.

There were several songs about the possibilities of the seashore, with the locale fixed as the beach at Cape May, Long Branch, Newport or Brighton, according to the character of the potential audience, "Strolling on the Brooklyn Bridge," with its naïve disregard of traffic, followed the popular "Walking Down Broadway," which has become almost equally anachronistic. Central Park, as a meeting place for lovers, was glorified in a song called "Flirting on the Ice," for the winter-time, and another, "Twilight in the Park," for spring and summer, both title-pages indicating approximately the same spot as their sentimental ideal.

But in 1880 there appeared a song, "Strolling in

the Park," which effectively parodied these sentimentalities, and the great American self-consciousness asserted itself once more. Another popular song of the year 1880 was "Somebody's Grandpa," dedicated to the New York *Tribune*, because of the news item which was its inspiration. Here is the paragraph that did the damage: "A little girl in town recently saw an old drunken man lying on a doorstep, the perspiration pouring off his face, and a crowd of children preparing to make fun of him. She took up her little apron and wiped his face, and then looked up so pitifully to the rest and said, "Oh, don't hurt him! He's somebody's grandpa!" The song resulting from this brief suggestion had its moral climax in the following stanza:

O dear little children! never forget,  
 Though the life of a man may be sinful and wild,  
 There still may be hearts to whom he is dear;  
 He may yet own the love of an innocent child.  
 He's somebody's grandpa, brother, or friend,  
 You may bruise some child's heart when you laugh  
 at and tease,  
 So silence the jest, hear May's pleading words,  
 "He's somebody's grandpa! Don't hurt him, please."

Far more cheerful was the mood of most of the minstrel songs of the day, particularly that of "The Big Sunflower," Billy Emerson's biggest hit, whose popularity extended almost to the end of the century, and has not yet entirely evaporated. The cheerful nonsense

of its chorus is enough to establish the mood of "The Big Sunflower." But it should be heard in its entirety if possible, and with at least the music of the dance steps that interrupted its carefree lines:

And I feel just as happy as a big sunflow'r,  
That nods and bends in the breezes,  
And my heart is as light as the wind that blows  
The leaves from off the tree-zes.

The same year that produced "Somebody's Grandpa" also saw the birth of an effective parody on the sentimental geographical songs, with the title "Strolling in the Park One Day." This contained the conventional dance steps and other characteristic features, but its absurdity was conscious rather than unintentional. The following year saw Harrigan and Hart's "Major Gilfeather," and the American sense of humor seemed at last to have come into its own.

It received a terrible set-back, however, in the so-called "Gay Nineties," also known as the mauve or maudlin decade. Here our yearning for the sentimental ran wild, and we have never fully recovered. Irving Berlin is to-day a reincarnation of the nineties, and his ballads have a purely sentimental appeal, while the absurd songs published and recorded for the "hill-billy trade," with an actual public that runs into the millions, are deliberate imitations of their more honest but not more ridiculous forefathers.

It is true that the late eighties maintained their balance with at least an occasional touch of jocularly. Tony Pastor sang "The Cat Came Back" and "Where Did You Get That Hat?" (with its major chord melody, exactly like the trumpet-call of the Herald in "Lohengrin") and as late as 1890 Maggie Cline began her conquest of the Irish with that grand fighting song, "Throw Him Down, McCloskey." "Ta-ra-ra boom de-ré" (generally pronounced "boom dee-ay") came a year later, to start a long line of choruses built of meaningless and nonsensical syllables, whose current representative is the insistent "vo-deo-do" of the jazz babies.

There was the sanity of sincere sentiment in such songs as "Annie Rooney," which came to us from England in 1889, Maud Nugent's "Sweet Marie," "Rosie O'Grady," Harry Dacre's "Daisy Bell" (with its still popular description of "a bicycle built for two") and his equally effective "Elsie from Chelsea," and Lawlor's immortal "Sidewalks of New York," which seems to have become a permanent lyric slogan for democracy.

But in 1892 came "After the Ball," and the deluge. Charles K. Harris's own description of the birth of this song is quoted in the author's "Read 'Em and Weep." Evidently it was an epoch-making event. The inspiration came after an actual dance in Chicago, in response to the request for a sentimental number on a Milwaukee minstrel program. The first performance was ruined because the amateur performer forgot his lines, and Mr.

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Harris insists even to-day that the song is not effective unless it is allowed to tell its entire story. But later it was introduced in Hoyt's "Trip to Chinatown" by J. Aldrich Libbey, the outstanding baritone of his day, "in full evening dress," as Mr. Harris notes triumphantly, and it was an instant success. Mr. Libbey, whose pictures remind one of Andy Gump, but whose voice must have been phenomenal, actually sang "After the Ball" half a tone higher than it was written. It is difficult to understand how it could have been generally sung even in the original key, for the range is far too great for the average voice.

Mr. Harris made good use of the "story-teller technique" in "After the Ball," having "a little maiden" (with the accent on the "a") "climb an old man's knee," and "beg for a story" with the appealing, though inaccurately rhymed words, "Do, Uncle, please!" When the old man tells his story of a perfectly futile and impossible lovers' quarrel, he finds it convenient to insert the word "pet" whenever a syllable has to be filled out, so that this term of endearment eventually becomes little more than a suffix for the preceding word.

John Philip Sousa really popularized "After the Ball" by playing it daily at the Chicago World's Fair. Its circulation ran into the millions, and it had many parodies, including one called "After the Fair Is Over," and another about the lady who went to the ball and



later removed her glass eye, false teeth, artificial limbs, etc., before going to bed.

Charles K. Harris was responsible for many other popular songs, of which the best known was "Just Break the News to Mother," published in 1897, with song slides to illustrate it, with the soldiers in Civil War uniform. But an actual war was needed to popularize it, and the blowing up of the Maine in Havana Harbor came just in the nick of time. The blue uniforms made no real difference after that, and "Just Break the News to Mother" quickly became a big success.

Another 1892 hit was "The Bowery," also introduced in the "Trip to Chinatown," as was "Do, Do, My Huckleberry, Do," perhaps the first of the hard-boiled modern school of business-like sophistication. "The Bowery" was aimed at the rural "rube" type, and cracked some fearful and wonderful jokes in the process of its city-bred witticisms.

A year later came "Two Little Girls in Blue," with a plot similar to that of "After the Ball," with an uncle this time taking a nephew into his confidence and therefore substituting the syllable "lad" for the "pet" of Mr. Harris. The same year saw "The Fatal Wedding," written by Gussie Davis, a colored Pullman porter, later responsible for "The Baggage Coach Ahead," whose story of the weeping child and its dead mother was unquestionably drawn from personal observation. "The Fatal Wedding" contained not only a baby's death but

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a father's suicide, and lived up to the best morbid standards of its period.

In 1894 a national movement in favor of tolerance was lyrically inaugurated by a waltz-song called "She May Have Seen Better Days." (Incidentally almost all of the songs of the nineties were waltzes, for it was an accepted theory that one could not be sentimental except in waltz time.) "She May Have Seen Better Days" had its companion, four years later, in "She Is More to Be Pitied Than Censured," with its final verdict, "that a man was the cause of it all."

Edward Marks and Joe Stern were traveling salesmen up to 1894, but went into the music-publishing business after launching a successful song, "The Little Lost Child." So far as is known, this was the first song to be illustrated with lantern slides.

"The Little Lost Child" was followed in 1896 by "My Mother Was a Lady, or, If Jack Were Only Here," also by Marks and Stern. This ballad, with only its chorus in waltz time, was inspired by an actual occurrence in a New York restaurant, and contained among other lines the immortal couplet:

"And when a pretty waitress brought them a tray of  
food,  
They spoke to her familiarly, in manner rather rude."

Eighteen hundred ninety-six also introduced the first genuine rag-time songs, "The New Bully," sung by

May Irwin, and "My Gal's a High-Born Lady," composed by Barney Fagan, who is still active on the stage.

The Spanish War popularized not only "Just Break the News to Mother," but "A Hot Time in the Old Town To-night," which turned a camp meeting idea into an effective marching tune, and eventually, "Good-by, Dolly Gray," and "The Blue and the Gray," by Paul Dresser. The latter, who was a brother of Theodore Dreiser, the novelist, had already written his best song, "The Banks of the Wabash," for which he was given a monument in Indiana, and another heart-breaker, "Just Tell Them That You Saw Me," containing such lines as "Don't turn away, Madge, I am still your friend," and "Come home with me when I go, Madge, the change will do you good." Mr. Dresser also wrote "The Convict and the Bird," "My Gal Sal," and other big successes.

Harry Von Tilzer came into the limelight a little later, and is still writing songs on Broadway. His sentimental gem was "A Bird in a Gilded Cage," which wrung tears from at least two generations. It is to his credit that the same man could write "Down Where the Wurzburger Flows," "Under the Annhaeuser Busch," "Please Go 'Way and Let Me Sleep," "On a Sunday Afternoon," "Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie," "Alexander" and "I Want a Girl Just Like the Girl That Married Dear Old Dad," which is still a close harmony favorite.



Mr. Von Tilzer started the craze for dance songs with "The Cubanola Glide," which had its later descendants in the Turkey Trot, the Grizzly Bear, the Bunny Hug, and eventually the Fox-Trot, Charleston and Black Bottom. J. Bodewald Lampe, who now writes music for the movies, contributed to this general school with "My Creole Belle," in 1900. Charlie Case had by this time pretty well burlesqued the sentimental ballads out of existence. The spirit of our popular songs became perceptibly lighter, and we were already subconsciously on the way to jazz.

The year 1902 not only gave us the best comic songs of Harry Von Tilzer, but Jean Schwartz's glorious "Mr. Dooley," the handiest topical song of a whole generation (only approached by "Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean"), the charming "Under the Bamboo Tree," by Bob Cole and J. Rosamond Johnson, and "The Good Old Summer Time," still a self-starter for moonlight parties of all kinds.

In 1903 came "Bedelia" (also by Jean Schwartz) and "Sweet Adeline," which has generally passed for a much older song, chiefly because of the vast number of its renditions, laid end to end.

"Tammany" provided another good topical song, in 1905, with a political flavor, and the same year produced "The Shade of the Old Apple Tree," by Van Alstyne. The same composer created "I'm Afraid to Go Home in the Dark," in 1907, and in 1908 the big hit was

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"Waiting at the Church." Already satire was in full sway.

Then, in 1910, Irving Berlin burst into fame with "Alexander's Rag-Time Band," but reversed the logical process, and turned from a comedian into a sentimentalist, making his biggest successes with such ballads as "What'll I do?" "All Alone," "Always" and "Remember."

Nat Ayer continued the lighter tradition in "Oh, You Beautiful Doll," and "It's Moving Day Way Down in Jungletown," written in honor of Theodore Roosevelt and his African hunting trip.

The greatest of railroad ballads, "Casey Jones," published in 1909, was really a much older song, going through various stages of folk-music before reaching the printed page. "Hiawatha," by Neil Moret, better known as a tune than for its words, was whistled for a number of years.

But the best popular song of the twentieth century thus far is unquestionably "The Long, Long Trail," by Stoddard King and Zo Elliott, published in 1913. The text had already won the Yale Poetry Prize, and Mr. Elliott's appealing melody made it the logical homesick song of our soldiers when they went into the World War. Later we had "Roses of Picardy," by Haydn Wood, who also wrote "A Brown Bird Singing," both admirable light songs. Our own entry into the war also inspired George Cohan's "Over There," a simple bugle

melody popularized by Nora Bayes, "Rose of No Man's Land," and the maudlin "Hello, Central, Give Me No Man's Land," another Jean Schwartz creation, interpreted by Al Jolson, and finding a direct ancestry in Harris's "Hello, Central, Give Me Heaven" of the middle nineties.

Another general song that found much favor during war days was "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows," and here Frédéric Chopin deserves full credit. The melody was taken bodily from his *Fantasie Impromptu* in C sharp Minor, and some people have not yet found out why they liked the tune so much.

In this borrowing of old tunes for new, the most notorious case, naturally, is that of "Yes, We Have No Bananas," with its background of the "Hallelujah Chorus," "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean," "I Dreamt That I Dwelt in Marble Halls," and "Aunt Dinah's Quilting Party." Nobody has yet discovered just why this song became so popular. The absurdity of the catch phrase was probably the main reason. It is said to have been the actual saying of a Greek fruit vendor, and the creators of the song spent months singing it in a Long Island roadhouse before the public began to take notice. Once the phrase had taken on the aspect of slang, however, it received free national publicity from every merchant who had anything to sell. The date of this classic was 1923, and it is still popular abroad, where they have come to regard it as the American national anthem.

The banana song was followed in 1924 by "Marcheta," supposedly a Mexican melody, but actually borrowed directly from the "Merry Wives of Windsor" Overture, and with a long line of descendants leading to the current "Ramona." Then came "Valencia," a real importation, which swept the country in such sensational style that Tin Pan Alley thought seriously of giving up the fox-trot altogether.

Recently the tendency of American popular music has been in the direction of the sophisticated love-song, with increasing emphasis on the cleverness of the lyrics, and with such young composers as Gershwin, Rodgers, Donaldson and Youmans coming to the fore. Jerome Kern holds his own as a master of popular melody, and his score of "Show Boat" may be considered a musical event of far greater importance than the "Egyptian Helen" of Richard Strauss.

The days of huge sales of popular sheet-music, however, seem to have ended. The phonograph first took away the incentive to group singing around the family piano, and now the radio is gradually depriving us of even the power of selection. Yet it seems safe to predict that human beings will continue to follow the line of least resistance in the way of an obvious tune and an enticing rhythm. They will continue to sing of the events of the day, though not for a very long time, and to express the commonplaces of sentimental experience in a lyric form, flippant, superficial or maudlin, as the

case may be. And with all this intense but transient concentration on the obvious, the gradual discovery of the literature of permanent music will proceed, slowly but surely, with the aid of an occasional Beethoven or Schubert centenary, and the hopes and prayers of all serious students and teachers of the unforgettable inspirations of great music.



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*Scherzo*

[ NOT AT ALL SERIOUS ]





I  
PLAY IT WITH MUSIC  
[AN AUCTION BRIDGE FANTASY]



*Play It with Music*

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AS I do not consider myself a good Bridge player, it was with some hesitancy that I accepted the invitation to make a fourth in a home where the game was a household tradition. Besides, I do not like to play as high as half a cent a point. A quarter is the right stake for friendly Bridge, to my mind, or even a tenth, "just to encourage correct play."

However, my hosts proved delightful, and put me at ease immediately by turning on the family radio. "We hope you don't mind a little music with your Bridge," said one. "It really is not at all disturbing when you have the Auction habit, and we find it quite educational just to keep a little melody and harmony in the background."

I made no objection, for I felt that I would at least enjoy the music, even if it interfered with my power of concentration, unreliable at best. For a time, I admit, the radio distracted me, and I played the first few hands rather mechanically.

No disapproval had been expressed, however. I held

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fair cards and played them, I thought, adequately. Then suddenly a long and painful silence convinced me that something was wrong. From the loud-speaker came the sound of a quartet in that beautiful hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light."

"Oh, is it my lead?" I said hastily, and the embarrassing situation was saved.

Music came to my rescue again a few minutes later. I held one of those hands that I would ordinarily bid as a No Trump, three Aces, one with the King behind it, four quick tricks. But there were three useless little Clubs in the hand, and the Heart suit contained four cards, headed by the Ace-King. I had heard about these four-card suit bids, so I hesitated.

Suddenly the voice of the radio announcer came out clearly, "We will now hear that good old song, 'Heart of My Heart, I Love You.' " My mind was made up instantly. "One Heart," I announced, firmly. There was no other bidding, and my partner laid down four Hearts to the Queen-Jack, the Kings to my two outside Aces, and a singleton Club. I would have been wide open in that suit at No Trump, with six of them on my left. As it was, I made the game, ruffing two losing Clubs, taking my four high trumps separately, and using my outside Aces and Kings for the necessary four tricks above the line.

"*That was a wise bid,*" said my partner approv-

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ingly, and I glowed with pleasure, inwardly giving thanks for my good ears.

The next time that I pondered over a play, it was really without much cause, but music once more did its bit to clear my mind. An orchestra was giving selections from "The Vagabond King" as I played a No Trumper, and a lead came from my left through a most important King, only once guarded. I needed this card to make game, and under the spell of the music I tossed it carelessly on the lead. To my surprise it took the trick, and my reputation advanced another notch.

The next occasion was so flagrant that I almost felt apologetic, although no one else seemed to notice how the music was helping my game. Some one was singing "Water Boy" on the air, while my partner and I worked hard to save game and rubber in a major suit. I was strongly tempted to lead a good Jack of Diamonds, feeling sure that the Declarer had one more. But even as I was drawing the card, the voice rang out: "You Jack of Diamonds, I Knows You of Old! Done rob my pocket of silver and gold!"

I changed my mind, led another card, and the situation was saved. It nearly made me laugh out loud when my opponent said gaily, "I was hoping you might lead that Jack of Diamonds on a chance. It would have given me a trump in one hand and a discard in the other, and I needed just that!"

After that I deliberately listened to the music and

played my cards accordingly. When I was tempted to bid recklessly, the radio sang just in time, "A Rambling Rake of Poverty, the Son of a Gamboleer," and I passed, correctly as it proved. Blanche Ring's old welcome, "The Top of the Morning to You," reminded me to lead from the top of a sequence, most necessarily. Fannie Brice's "Second-hand Rose" persuaded me to play high second hand, from a King-Queen combination, to avoid the possible finesse of a Jack, and rightly. A real doubt as to the best suit to lead defensively against a No Trump declaration was dispelled by the timely announcement of a jazz program from the Club Lido. I led the Club and saved the game. Eventually came the chance for a rather risky finesse. I might be set if it failed, but would make game if it worked. As I considered, a plaintive tenor voice caroled, "Queen of My Heart, I'll Serve But Thee." I played the Queen instead of the Ace, and the finesse won!

The same tenor persuaded me to use some little trumps in the Dummy before drawing them all out, by a chance line, "Rough Is the Way," and the play produced an extra game-going trick.

Finally came the supreme test of playing Bridge with music. My partner had doubled a bid of three and it had been redoubled. The crucial play came when I got in with one trump in my hand and two other taking cards, and we needed all three tricks to set the Contract. I knew there was only one trump left in the Declarer's

hand, for I had carefully counted thirteen, but I was not sure if my spots were higher than his. I could not afford to let him make his trump, but if it should beat mine, we would lose all three tricks and he would make two above his Contract.

I cocked my ear to the radio, and miraculously the message came, as though from the Bridge heaven itself: "When the Last Great Trump Shall Sound," sung by a mixed chorus! I led my eight of trumps and it won by a single spot! Exultantly I threw down the remaining cards, shouting "The Rest Are Mine!" and grasped the congratulatory hand of my partner.

Hereafter I shall play Bridge with music, or not at all.





II  
THE VOICE  
[A TRAGEDY]



## II

### *The Voice*

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EVER since she began taking lessons it has been known as "the Voice." Somehow the definite article, in place of a possessive pronoun, suggested abstract infinity, something to be discussed only in reverential whispers.

By the time she was old enough to go on the concert stage, if permitted, "the Voice" had accumulated a local saga all its own. Old-timers coming back to town were told, "You wouldn't recognize the Voice now. It has matured so."

Urged to try it out in public, her only reply was "the Voice is not quite ready yet. For my friends, yes, but not for the world in general," accompanied by a dazzling smile that spelled PERSONALITY.

In the back parlor, with Mother at the piano, "the Voice" sounded grand and noble and inspiring. "It will put this town on the map," said the makers of legend, meanwhile looking up the records of the Metropolitan Opera stars.

A Visiting Musician was persuaded to listen to "the

Voice," with everything just right and the promise of refreshments afterwards. "The Voice has great—possibilities," he said, hesitatingly. "I would recommend careful study."

The next step was New York. Letters came back at intervals. "You would never recognize the Voice. It has grown so and developed such Art."

Finally a concert in the local High School Auditorium "to raise funds for a career." Flowers and applause. "The Voice is all that has been prophesied," wrote the Society Reporter. "Its happy owner is assured of a glorious future."

Back to New York. More trials, tests, hearings, opinions. "The Voice is too great potentially to spoil with a premature début." "The Voice needs experience, continued contact with critical audiences." "The Voice is not yet ready for it is of the type that must conquer completely or not at all." "The Voice is lyric." "The Voice is dramatic." "The Voice is a luscious mezzo." "The Voice is a coloratura soprano."

Years have passed, and "the Voice" remains an abstraction. People returning to town are told, "But you should hear the Voice now. You will be astonished at the improvement."

Friends still talk of it in whispers in the back parlor. Local audiences still gather for the annual concert in the High School Auditorium.

And still "the Voice is not ready." It never will be.

III

OUR MUSIC CRITIC OF THE NINETIES



### III

#### *Our Music Critic of the Nineties*

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##### "AFTER THE BALL"

THIS new waltz song is by Charles K. Harris, and enjoys the distinguished endorsement of J. Aldrich Libbey, the eminent baritone, and our great master of the baton, John Philip Sousa, who has threatened to play it daily at the coming World's Fair in Chicago. In the words of Mr. Sousa, "If they don't like 'After the Ball,' we shall make them like it."

Nevertheless, we cannot share in this enthusiasm and find it difficult to predict any success for the Harris ditty. The range of the melody is too great for the average voice and the story is improbable, although reputed to be based on actual facts. Frankly, we do not believe that any gentleman would give up his lady love even if he saw her kissing a man in the conservatory, particularly when he might so easily have discovered that it was her brother. We accept the situation chiefly because it permits the dramatic line "Down fell the glass, pet, broken, that's all." If the rest of Mr. Harris's

song were of equal excellence, it might easily find favor with the public.

“MY MOTHER WAS A LADY, OR, IF JACK WERE ONLY HERE”

This new inspiration, by the affecting sentiment of its lines, would seem to deserve immediate favor.

A splendid stroke of originality puts the verse in a different rhythm from the chorus, which, necessarily, is in waltz time. The story told by the song is improving as well as elegant, for it points out how a lowly waitress, when addressed by male diners “in manner rather rude,” may preserve her sweet dignity and incidentally win a husband on the spot.

There are several fine bits of philosophy, such as “’Tis true one touch of nature, it makes the whole world kin,” and altogether this reviewer is delighted to give his whole-hearted approval to “My Mother Was a Lady.”

#### “THE BOWERY”

Here is a song that is gradually winning recognition in Mr. Charles Hoyt’s sumptuous production, “A Trip to Chinatown.” From the sheet music, one might have some difficulty in ascertaining its exact significance, but undoubtedly such problems are eliminated in the dramatic presentation.

Although “The Bowery” is unquestionably in comic vein, it contains an underlying moral purpose, a warn-



ing against the lure and the luxury of New York's famous white-lighted thoroughfare. The rather grim humor would scarcely be intelligible to any but the actual denizens of the metropolis.

For example, when the "fly copper" says "You've been held up," the "rube" replies, "No, sir, but I've been knocked down." After a "barber" has shaved the rustic fellow with "a razor that scratched like a pin," he says, with unconscious wit, "that was the worst scrape I ever got in." But the best line of all is: "'Wasn't he pulling your leg?' said he. Said I: 'He never laid hands on me.'" To any one familiar with modern slang, this is simply delicious. For sophisticated Americans, "The Bowery" should fill an important niche in the gallery of popular music.

"DAISY BELL"

Mr. Harry Dacre, who gave us the charming "Elsie from Chelsea," here pays his respect to the new woman and the best traditions of up-to-date sport. The heroine of his latest song is not wooed in terms of the conventional carriage, or even a fashionable coach and four. The vehicle of his affections, if a play on words may be permitted, is the new-fangled "tandem," which is described naïvely as "a bicycle built for two." We wish the young couple every happiness!

ORPHEUS



IV  
A PARALLEL PARABLE



#### IV

### *A Parallel Parable*

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TWO boys, Ike Johnson and Mike Williams, were known locally as very good fiddlers by the time they graduated from High School. Both decided upon musical careers.

Ike Johnson earned some money playing in a summer hotel, got his father to promise a little more backing if it was needed and went to New York to study and look for a job.

He won the interest of a first-class teacher by his talent, picked up some work in the dance orchestras and the theaters, and joined the Musicians' Union.

To-day he is one of the violinists in New York's biggest movie house and regularly sends money home to the folks.

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Mike Williams started with the support of the local financiers. Backed by ten thousand dollars of their money, he went abroad and "finished" under the most expensive of foreign masters.

He changed his name to Mischa Guglielmi, hired a manager (with a large payment in advance) and announced a New York recital. The newspapers guardedly agreed that he was good.

With the help of new friends and fresh capital, he advertised heavily and started on a concert tour which included some paying engagements. He kept this up for several years, until he realized that his income would never catch up with his expenditures.

To-day he is one of the violinists in New York's biggest movie house and gradually paying off his debts.

*Moral: Talent will find an audience somehow.*

v  
THE BOY WHO MADE GOOD





V

*The Boy Who Made Good*

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WITH A BOW TO WEBSTER, THE  
CARTOONIST AND THE LEXICOGRAPHER

“WELL, well, Big Boy, howsa boy? Thass good.”  
“Glad t’see ya. How’s ever’ little thing? Thass good.”

“So this is the great lyric-writer they all talkin’ about.”

“Oh, I ain’t done nothing much yet.”

“Oh, no. Only the best lyric-writer on Broadway outside Ira Gershwin and Hart and Buddy de Sylva and maybe one or two others.”

“There’s some think so but I ain’t kidding myself any.”

“Remember back home how you used to send comic valentines to people and write things on the fences and sidewalks?”

“Sure do. Them was the days.”

“And now pullin’ down the dough from a dozen hits at oncet!”

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"I wouldn't go so far as to say that. There ain't much money in the business."

"Howdja ever get started, Big Boy?"

"Just kep' on writin', thass all. Coupla years I stuck to th' old triplets. You know,—*love, dove, and above, moon, spoon and croon, bliss, kiss and miss*. Then I begin to branch out."

"Like *home and alone, and time and mine?*"

"Well, mostly two syllables or even more. Thass where the trick comes in."

"I remember the big noise when you rhymed *heart-ache* with *partake*."

"That was easy. I thought more of *mackerel* and *natural*."

"What was that about '*when you're in your nightie, write me?*' "

"Not so bad. But a little highbrow. I like my new one better: '*If I don't make whoopee, shoot me.*' "

"Then there was one that rhymed *pajamas* with *alarm us*."

"Now you're gettin' into the real class. The same chorus had *passionately* and *fashion lately*, and there was a catch line about *petting spells* and *wedding bells*."

"What do you figure is your best rhyme so far?"

"Well, thass hard to answer. It took me a long time to dope out *flexible* and *next to Bill*, and it was even harder to arrive at *necessary* and *best is Mary*."

"But your real winner? You must have some favorite."

"I guess it's those two lines:

*Gee, but it's fun to whirl  
My sweetest wonder-girl."*

"You sure have arrived, Big Boy."

"Wait a few weeks. My real chance is just comin'."

"Is it a secret?"

"No, it's no secret. I been ast to revise the words of th' opening chorus of the new 'Sillies.'—There's only twenty-four girls, all picked dancers.—Thass my big op'tunity."

"You'll make good, Big Boy. You never missed yet."



VI  
LOCAL TALENT



VI

*Local Talent*



THE term "local talent" refers to any artist who performs for nothing. It is assumed that any visitor must be paid for services rendered, but the home folk are automatically and permanently volunteers.

That is why every genius sooner or later leaves home. At one time the rule was applied not only to individual towns but to America as a whole. You had to go abroad and acquire a foreign name and reputation before you were admitted to be an artist. There has been some improvement in this respect, but a foreign label still helps, just as it does in the bootlegging business. In fact, art and alcohol have much in common.

Whenever a celebrity revisits his home town he is told apologetically that "we have some local talent on the program." But he knows quite well that if he returned home and stayed there, he himself would become "local talent" also. He could avoid it only by preserving a rigid seclusion and high-hatting his neighbors, in which case he would become a "local celebrity."

The tradition concerning local talent has resulted

in a curious deadlock. Artistic progress in most American communities is painfully slow because there are so few people on the spot to stimulate their fellow-citizens, guide, encourage and instruct them, and serve as shining examples of æsthetic achievement. But it is impossible to persuade such highly significant persons to stay in the average community because they know that it means a complete sacrifice of their professional standing. Therefore they stick to the big cities, which are all overcrowded with artists of every kind, and, in spite of their size, fail to support even a fair percentage of them adequately.

This means that all parties concerned are losers, the small communities, the big cities, and the artists themselves.

In those rare instances when some really fine musician or other master of art settles down to a useful career in some isolated spot, braving the obvious danger, the results are even more pathetic. He is often forced to see visiting performers acclaimed whose abilities are actually far below his own. But if he ventures occasionally to give a local concert, it is looked upon as a "benefit," and supported chiefly through altruistic motives. The observance of such a condition strengthens the resolve of every visiting artist to starve to death rather than face a similar situation.

Therefore local talent will continue to be snubbed and professional skill will continue to be congested and



the arts will continue to struggle against outrageous handicaps.

The answer to the problem, of course, is a simple one. Change human nature. That's all.



VII  
SLAVES TO MUSIC



## VII

### *Slaves to Music*

.....

#### *1. The Rhythmist*

JONES was what scientists call an Absolute Rhythmist. That is to say, he was so completely responsive to rhythm that he automatically and unconsciously kept time to any music within his hearing, no matter what he might be doing.

If any one spoke to him while even a piano was being played, he could answer only in abrupt, rhythmic snatches, exactly parallel to the musical accents themselves. It was not a bad habit when it came to walking, and for such household occupations as shaving, washing, shining shoes and the daily dozen it proved so helpful that Jones deliberately made use of phonograph records or the radio.

The greatest difficulty came with the eating of meals. Jones liked to dine out, being a bachelor, but he had to select his restaurants very carefully to get just the right music for rhythmic mastication.

He finally discovered a place on Sixth Avenue where

the orchestra could be depended upon to play with a steady rhythm, excellent for the digestion as well as for conversation. For a long time all went well, and it was just my luck to be present when the inevitable tragedy occurred.

We were dining together at his favorite table, and Jones, lulled into fancied security by weeks of rhythmic eating, had ordered an unusually rich and elaborate meal. He was chewing along with cheerful regularity, when suddenly, just as his mouth was full of a most indigestible lobster salad, the orchestra broke without warning into the jazziest of cross rhythms.

Jones's instinct rose desperately to the situation. His jaws worked convulsively, and for a time he managed to keep up with the beat of the music. But finally there came a horrible choking sound. His face grew purple. He cast one piteous look at me and slid unconscious to the floor.

By rare good fortune, however, this was one of those restaurants where it is customary to play Chopin's Funeral March whenever a patron drops, apparently lifeless, from his seat. The orchestra at once struck up the familiar strains, and the slow, measured rhythm had the immediate effect of a pulmotor. Jones gasped, opened his eyes, swallowed rhythmically several times and then resumed a normal breathing, in time to the music.

Before further danger could threaten, I had dragged

him out under the elevated railway, where all music was drowned in a steady roar, and the unfortunate slave to rhythm was safe at last.

## 2. *The Emotionalist*

Smith craved the experience of an emotional response to music. It irritated him to be told by his friends how much a certain composition meant to them, when it seemed to him merely a pleasant combination of melody and harmony. He wanted to feel those surgings of the soul which they described so dramatically, yet he seemed to remain a rather abstract, contented listener, occasionally even a little drowsy, and never particularly excited.

He was determined to remedy this defect in his emotional organism and he began religiously asking questions of those who were apparently more fortunate than himself. "You are too self-conscious," was the answer he generally received. "Don't be afraid to express yourself. Give free rein to any emotions that arise in you during a musical performance, no matter how absurd they may seem at the time."

Smith determined to try it. After all, he was not entirely devoid of feeling. It must be largely a matter of direct and honest interpretation.

His first chance came at an orchestral concert of rather modern music, the kind that is generally called

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“pregnant with hidden meaning.” Smith conscientiously refrained from reading the program notes, so as to give his virgin emotions absolutely fair play.

The music began, and for a time Smith sat in his usual state of comfortable coma, unaware of any definite stimulus or reaction. Gradually, however, a mood of melancholy began to take possession of him. His feeling of sorrow increased with every note of the music, and he soon felt the tears running down his cheeks. A few people looked at him curiously as he began to sniffle, but he paid no attention to them. Eventually he emitted a few short, barking sobs.

But the music changed again, and his emotions changed with it. His sorrow ceased abruptly and a distinctly cheerful mood took its place. Soon he felt quite happy and smiled through the tears still wet upon his cheeks.

Carried away with his newly discovered self-expression, Smith continued to give free rein to his emotions. In time, he found himself laughing aloud, and eventually he rolled from his seat into the aisle, in a paroxysm of uncontrollable mirth. But here his emotionalism was rudely interrupted. A firm hand dragged him to his feet, and a uniformed figure led him from the hall.

“But officer,” he gasped, “I was merely expressing my emotions.”

“I guess you don’t know your Strauss,” answered



the policeman grimly. "That part where you were crying out loud was the musical description of the baby taking its bath. And your terrific laughter came just at the saddest moment,—the death of the mother-in-law. I arrest you for disturbing the piece,"



VIII  
THE MUSIC DEALER



## VIII

### *The Music Dealer*

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“WELL, I sure am sorry to hear that Bill’s music business failed. Nice fellow, Bill, awfully nice fellow, but no experience running a music store. Too easy-going and kind-hearted, I guess. You know, music is a business, just the same as anything else.

“He had a nice little store, Bill did. Carried good stock, too. High class pianos, the best things in radio and small goods. Must have cost him a lot of coin to pay off his creditors.

“Tried to do too much, Bill did. Always obliging, always doing somebody a favor. That ain’t good business, no matter what they tell you.

“Take sheet music, for instance. Bill kept a full line of all the classical stuff, and the popular hits too. And if you asked for anything he didn’t happen to have, he’d get it for you in New York. Sometimes people would try them over on his pianos and then not take them after all, and some of that stuff is hard to return,—operas and symphonies and such.

“He sold a fair amount of populars, but after a

few people had played those tunes in his store, everybody knew them by heart. Anyway, there's not much gravy in populars unless you sell 'em by the thousands.

"Pianos he didn't seem to know how to sell. Always talking about tone and quality and endurance, instead of showing how nice they would look in a parlor, and maybe throwing in a scarf and a lamp for good measure.

"He would lend a piano for any concert in town, figuring that that would encourage an interest in music. Generally he paid for printing the programs too, with just his little ad on the back.

"It didn't get him much, 'cause only a few people in this town can afford pianos, and they get them in New York. Bill was always willing to have people come in and practice in his store. He liked to consider his place the musical center of the town. Of course it was kind of tough when some of these jazz babies forgot their lighted cigarettes, 'cause those holes kind of make a piano look second hand. But he managed to keep things in pretty good shape, and he was always a great hand for tuning. Seemed as though he would go and tune a piano free of charge rather than have it sound bad.

"He played and led the singing for the Rotary Club every week and ran the church choir besides. That took a good deal of his time. The hotel piano was so bad that he tried to sell them a new one, but they wouldn't spend any money, so he just kept the old one

in the best condition he could, for the Rotary meetings.

"Seems he was pretty careless about collecting installments too. That's bad business in the music game. Can't sell any big stuff for cash, and if you don't hold them to their payments, where are you?

"There was the case of the widow Allen. He let her keep that upright piano a whole year after he knew she never could pay for it. It seems there was something wrong about her insurance papers, and the securities she had counted on turned out to be almost worthless. Then they foreclosed a mortgage on her, and he finally took the piano out just to keep some other creditor from getting it. He was criticized for that by some people,—taking a piano away from a poor widow,—but they didn't know the circumstances.

"The joke of it was that he finally sold that piano at half price to old man Ruxton, who could have afforded the best thing in his store ten times over. But that's always the way. You got to be business-like in the music game, the same as any other.

"The local music club would feel bad if Bill was to leave town. He always did them lots of favors. I understand they're thinking of holding a bridge party to help him out of his trouble. But they don't know the music business any more than he does.

"Well, it sure is tough, Bill failing that way. Nice fellow,—awfully nice fellow,—but no experience,—no experience at all."





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*Andante con moto*

[ Q U I T E S E R I O U S ]



I  
JAZZMANIA: A MUSICAL ANALYSIS



# I

## *Jazzmania*

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### A MUSICAL ANALYSIS

"JAZZMANIA" has become practically a geographical term covering the whole territory of modern extravagance, absurdity, exaggeration and distortion of values. While based upon a species of musical technique, the application of the slang coinage, "jazz," has become exceedingly general, fitting almost every abnormality of the age.

OUR murders, our trials, our welcomes to channel swimmers and transatlantic flyers, our sports, our conventions, our best sellers of literature and their authors, our drama, our concert and operatic stage, our elections, our social gatherings, our charities, our painting, sculpture and architecture, even our ethics and religions have all fallen into the idiom of jazz. Along normal, conservative lines they could not possibly succeed.

WHETHER this condition is deplorable or admirable is a matter for argument. It is at least interesting; and

an analysis of its musical basis may serve to clarify its fundamental and most significant properties.

THE origin of the term itself need not cause any sleepless hours. No one knows exactly where it came from, although its negro parentage is fairly obvious.

ONE explanation is that "jazz" was originally "jass," short for "jass-ack," the metathesis of "jack-ass." Certainly this would account for the mood of its early forms.

GEOFFREY O'HARA suggests that "jazz-bo" is an easy derivative from the pronunciation of the Biblical name "Jezebel," who was certainly a "jazz belle" in her day. If "jazz beau" is the masculine equivalent, the resulting etymology is at least picturesque. But it seems a bit labored,—*"gesucht,"* as the German scholars would call it.

No matter what the explanation of the slang coinage, its meaning is clear enough. Jazz is not a musical form; it is a method of treatment.

It is possible to take any conventional piece of music and "jazz it up." The actual process is one of distortion, of rebellion against normalcy.

JAZZ, therefore, may be practically defined as "the distortion of the normal or conventional in music," or

in anything else, for that matter. A caricature is a jazz portrait, and a burlesque is jazz drama. "Jazzmania" is simply the habit of thinking and acting in distorted terms; a manner of life consistently at war with conservative tradition.

THE reasons for this state of affairs are not hard to find. It is a part of human nature to rebel against anything orthodox after it has been so long established or so strongly emphasized as to seem burdensome. The whole history of art, and of civilization in general, shows merely a series of revolutions. There has always been a reason for form or technique of any kind, but once that reason was forgotten, and formality became an end in itself, the rebellion of the liberals was inevitable.

IN the field of music, the blame for jazz (if it is indeed culpable) may be placed squarely upon the shoulders of the conservatives, the hide-bound, intolerant scholars, artists, critics, highbrows, self-appointed guardians of taste and standards, who have insisted that music is a matter of rules, regulations and formulas, and refused to admit the significance of any opinions, responses and reactions but their own. These reactionary formalists of music have had their parallels in all other lines of art and life, and the immediate effect of their activities to-day is jazzmania.

THE self-sufficient "expert" of music is a familiar figure, and always has been. Most of the "artists" belong in this class. They surround their trade with an ectoplasm of mystery and crown it with a halo of transcendental hokum. They are afraid to admit that they make their living through perfectly intelligible abilities, shrewdly developed to a point of commercial value, and maintain the pose of ineffability chiefly to avoid embarrassing investigations. Within their own fraternity, their methods are well known and freely discussed, but not for the benefit of the public.

THERE is some excuse for this, but far less for the attitude of the mere parasites of music, those who have not the creative or interpretive ability to rank as artists, but nevertheless, with the help of second-hand information and an often hypocritical enthusiasm, constitute themselves a stern judiciary of what the average listener shall like or not like. Too often their dicta are treated with awe through mere lack of information or experience, and even when they are unquestionably right, and in accord with the sympathetic understanding of all qualified judges, their intolerance is a menace and a deterrent to æsthetic progress.

WHEN the average man or woman, the potential music-lover, ventures occasionally to express an honest opinion or a sincere enthusiasm, he or she is almost sure to meet the rebuff of one of these contemptuous tradi-



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tionalists, in the stock formula of disapproval: "Your taste is terrible." Driven back into his shell, the business man decides that it is "all over his head" and that "Jazz is good enough" for him, while the housekeeping woman reiterates her own formula, "I don't know anything about music, but I know what I like."

Jazz has found millions of such disciples because it offered not only an escape from the conventional but actually represented also the line of least resistance. Jazz rhythms are based upon the universal human instinct to keep time, an instinct which actually seeks to lighten physical effort by a rhythmic accompaniment, and has succeeded in doing so, from the folk-song of the reapers and the strain of the Volga boatmen to the modern daily dozen assisted by phonograph or radio.

EVEN the complications of syncopation or "rag-time" cannot obscure the regularity of the fundamental beat, and to the jazz-lover "keeping time," mentally or physically, becomes a game in which the reward is the personal satisfaction of overcoming an invisible enemy. "You can't fool me," says the jazz-hound on the trail of rhythm, coming down on the beat with the same feeling of triumph that was the psychological secret of cross-word puzzles and "Ask Me Another."

Jazz melodies have been mostly simple and obvious, easily remembered after one or two hearings.

"Popular music is familiar music," and when recognition is made easy, it is a tremendous asset. Again, the distortion of melody serves as an incentive, an encouragement to individual attention and a stimulator of personal pride in its mastery.

THE distortions of jazz, however, are not merely rhythmic and melodic. They also deal with harmony and tone color.

JAZZ harmonies are quite in line with the freedom of modern harmonizing in general, and actually fall short of the liberties constantly taken by the "serious" composers of music. Tonal coloring also has been revolutionized by the development of muted brass, of virtuosity in the wood-wind, and of a never-ending variety and versatility of percussion. Here again the jazz band is merely presenting in an obvious and insistent form the whimsical individuality which is characteristic of all ultra-modern music.

Jazz effects are, in truth, nothing new in the musical art. Distortions of some sort have figured in composition of all kinds for several centuries. Every revolutionary composer has started with apparent distortions which to a later generation seemed entirely logical and necessary. (From this, however, it by no means follows that *all* distortion is logical and necessary.)

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MONTEVERDE, putting a deliberate dissonance into Ariadne's lament to express its tragedy, becomes perhaps the first of all jazz composers. Beethoven definitely jazzes the choral melody in the Finale of his Ninth Symphony when he orchestrates it for a combination of brass, bassoons, cymbals and triangle, and at the same time breaks up the tune into a sprightly, skipping rhythm.

SCHUMANN's love of syncopation is continually apparent, and this is accentuated in his greatest follower, Brahms. Chopin uses jazz rhythms, jazz melodies (many of which have been stolen by modern popular composers) and jazz harmonies, actually finishing one of his Preludes on a "blue" chord (containing the interval of the minor seventh).

LISZT was a jazz composer par excellence, and a good showman to boot. Along conventional lines he would hardly have been noticed. Neither would his son-in-law, Wagner.

TSCHAIKOWSKY and Dvorák both introduced jazz effects into their most popular symphonies. Debussy's harmonies are the very essence of modern jazz, and in such a piece as the familiar "Golliwog's Cake Walk" he distorts melody and rhythm as well.

STRAVINSKY and all the ultra-modernists revel in jazz instrumentation. Most of them have tried to write

jazz in the American style, but without much success. Stravinsky's "Rag-time" and the jazz movement of his piano concerto cannot compare with the work of Gershwin, Souvaine or Grofe; on the other hand, the jazz effects in "Petruschka" are thoroughly delightful.

(ONE of the best bits of modern jazz, incidentally, is in the Scherzo section of Schoenberg's String Quartet in D minor.)

JAZZ, however, remains a method of treatment rather than an individual idiom and in most cases it deals with older and more conventional material rather than with original creation. When Diaghileff produced "Le Coq d'Or" with a double cast of singers and pantomimists, he jazzed Rimsky's opera, just as Horace Liveright jazzed "Hamlet" by presenting it in modern clothes. (But Shakespeare, in turn, jazzed history when he made Hamlet a contemporary Elizabethan.) Shaw's "Cæsar and Cleopatra" is, of course jazz play-writing with satirical intent, and John Erskine has given legend and mythology similar treatment in "Galahad" and "The Private Life of Helen of Troy."

SCHUBERT was jazzed to create the operetta of "Blossom Time," and "The Miracle" represents a jazzing of all kinds of material, musical, pictorial, literary and religious.

THE classics of music are daily jazzed for the purposes of the motion picture, which is in itself a jazz version of literature and the drama. Negro spirituals and gospel songs are a most effective jazz version of the Bible.

THE Reverend John Roach Straton is one of the greatest of jazz religionists, whose invectives, curiously enough, are constantly aimed at the very technique by which he makes his living. Billy Sunday and Aimée MacPherson are far more honest about it, and so is Texas Guinan, whose jazz personality of exactly the same type merely happens to exercise its powers in the direction of a social rather than a religious frenzy.

Jazz painting and sculpture have become so common that their distortions are almost accepted as normal. The artist who wishes to emphasize color generally does so at the expense of form. If there is some detail of outline that he considers particularly important, he does not hesitate to exaggerate, quite in the jazz spirit of the cartoonist.

ULTRA-MODERN statuary is full of the same kind of distortion. Sometimes it is all head, sometimes all legs, sometimes merely a combination of curves or angles to give the effect of motion or rest.

THE jazz architecture of New York is a practical one, rising literally out of the necessity to build for

height alone, since upward is the only direction in which any space is left. The results, however, have a distinctive beauty quite aside from their utility. The architectural jazzing of Hollywood, on the other hand, is chiefly for the sake of amusement.

NATURE also expresses herself occasionally in the jazz manner. In most cases a landscape or a mountain or a sea view is assumed to be normal merely because it is obviously natural. But the bizarre coloring of a sunset generally partakes of distortion, with a consequent shock of pleasant surprise, while the stratified rock formations of America's western canyons are assuredly an overwhelming jazz of geological traditions.

IT cannot be argued therefore that distortion is fundamentally unnatural and illogical. Its spirit enters in some degree into every art and beauty to which the elements of selection and composition contribute at all. Even the photographer consciously applies the principles of emphasis and accent in selecting his subjects, his lights and his angles.

BASICALLY the new jazzmania need not be considered a menace to civilization. The powers of truth and universality are not to be denied for long. Ancient Greece delivered her drama through absurd masks and in stilted, artificial phrases, but they have given way to natural, human expressions of face and language. The



honest, normal painting of Rembrandt, Raphael and other great masters of the brush survives to-day, as does the music of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms and the poetry of Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Goethe and Schiller.

"THE good, the beautiful, the true," they are all essentially the same, and no distortion of real values can continue indefinitely unless it has a permanent significance in emphasizing such values. This has been the case with every radical change in the conventions of all art, and particularly of music. The mere fact that such changes have invariably met with contemporary opposition does not prove that distortion as such is an admirable thing, or that the opposition to change is always wrong. Time alone can show what contains the elements of permanence and hence of truth and beauty.

Jazz seems to be the modern folk-music of America, a unique phenomenon in that it has sprung from a fully established and on the whole a highly civilized nation. It exhibits all the characteristics of primitive folk-music, but in a complex and distorted form. It has essentially a monotony of rhythm, a simplicity of melody, a neutrality of mode (neither major nor minor), a distinctive tonal coloring, and, most important of all, the spirit of improvisation, and all these traits are to be found in naïve folk-music the world over.

IF the normal processes of the past are to repeat themselves, as has always been the case, then the best elements of this new folk-music will survive in the art-music of the future, and the worst will be eliminated, by the simple law of evolution.

To be afraid of jazzmania in any form is to deny the very principles of human life. "Whatsoever is good, whatsoever is honest" must somehow endure, and if it does not, then it was not true to begin with.

IT would not be fair to dismiss jazzmania as a passing fad, for it is far more than that. But it would be equally unfair to classify it as merely destructive and to group its various distortions under the general head of aimless irresponsibility.

THE weakness of jazz is that it has been embraced by so many who have not taken the trouble to find out what is behind it, in music or any other art. Lazy minds are inclined to ask merely "What's the latest?" and let it go at that. The whole ultra-modern movement actually receives its chief support from those who have not the slightest conception of the traditions of any of the Arts.

BUT this again is a fundamentally untrue state of affairs and therefore cannot survive. Those who have supreme faith in the great masters of beauty are not



troubling themselves unduly over the jazz menace. They are even interested in it as a distinctly entertaining phenomenon of human nature. It is only childlike ignorance that interprets a grimace as a permanent disfiguration.



II

HOW GOOD IS PRIMITIVE MUSIC?



## II

### *How Good Is Primitive Music?*

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YOUR ultra-modernist of music just loves to remind you that the Chinese scale contains more tones than the keyboard of the civilized piano, that the ancient Greeks knew musical intervals which the modern world fails to recognize, and that the veriest savage sings in quarter tones and less, with unlimited complexities of rhythm besides.

Scholarly pioneers have gone out from time to time among primitive tribes, armed with a recording phonograph, seeking what cacophonies they might devour. They have transcribed the results in the terms of conventional music, so far as possible, indicating notes which lay closer together than those of the chromatic scale, and faithfully marking every irregularity of rhythm, as 5-4, 7-8 or what-not.

The interest in primitive music has reached a point where it is generally accepted that all ancient scales contained more tones than are clearly distinguishable by the modern ear, and that this increased range somehow represents a music superior to that of Bach,

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Beethoven and Brahms, not to speak of the vastly greater possibilities of rhythmic irregularity.

The actual truth of the matter seems to be that primitive people, like all children, sing and play out of tune and out of time. The much vaunted sense of rhythm possessed by savages is mostly a myth, and granting that the primitives, like all other musical illiterates, do sing and play quarter tones and even smaller intervals, there is no way of proving that they do this intentionally, or that they are aware of the musical significance of the result. They are aiming instinctively at the intervals which create a common response in all mankind, but their ears are bad, and so they seldom if ever strike them exactly. The enthusiastic musical scholar, however, hearing the subjects of his researches producing noises which are always slightly out of tune, immediately and with great avidity credits them with an absolute command of infinitesimal intervals and shakes his head mournfully over the decadence of a generation which satisfies itself with a scale of only twelve different tones.

When even a trained ear finds it difficult to distinguish much beyond the traditional interval of a half-tone (except to say in a general and rather vague fashion that it is "a little high" or "a little low") why should obviously untrained ears be credited with such superhuman powers? The myth of racial musical ability is just about due to be knocked into a cocked

hat. The simple fact is that every race contains some individuals of musical talent, and others who are by nature debarred from successful performance, and the musical achievements of each race depend upon the habits that are developed and the encouragement that is given to individual geniuses.

The writer had a startling lesson in folk-music in connection with the great "Fair of the Iron Horse" in Baltimore not long ago. For this pageant a troop of Blackfoot Indians was sent down from the Northwest, and these primitive people presented their music on every possible occasion.

The entire company included exactly four men who were recognized by their fellows as musicians to the extent that they could beat time with a drum and give some sort of pitch to a song. The rest were utterly unable to keep time, even in the simplest kind of a step, and their voices seldom even approximated what the leaders were singing.

The stock rhythm of this group of Indians was not the monotonously regular beat generally associated with the tom-tom, but alternating long and short beats, such as would be represented by a 3-4, 3-8 or 6-8 time in written music. The first note always had the accent, representing actually the first two beats in a group of three. The dance to this rhythm consisted of a mere "walk-around" in a circle, with arms locked, the dancers coming down heavily on one foot and then lightly on

the other. It was noticeable that the white people who joined the circle caught this rhythm without any difficulty, and actually kept better time than the general run of their red brethren.

As for the songs, they suggested no definiteness of pitch whatever, and were all of precisely the same character. There was a general agreement in the fact that the voices went up at certain spots and down at others, but beyond this there were only faint suggestions of unanimity of purpose, practically no melodic unison, and, of course, not a trace of harmony.

In the same pageant an attempt was made to secure a negro quartet from among the employees of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. A combing of the entire force developed only three adequate voices, of which only one could sing with anything like real volume or accuracy, regardless of tonal quality. Yet the assumption still persists that all negroes are by nature musical. (Incidentally, the B. & O. Glee Club of white men is an excellent chorus, and won a prize in a recent New York contest.)

The fact is that the negro race has its full share of musical talent, and the naturally rich voice of the black man produces in a singer perhaps a more individual and interesting quality of tone than would be the case with an equally gifted singer of the French or English race. But to argue that the negroes are therefore consistently



better singers than the French or English would be absurd.

Greek literature is full of references to the absolute power of certain scales and intervals to produce certain inevitable effects, particularly of an ethical nature. The Doric mode, for instance, which is nothing but a modified scale of D minor, is cited by Plato and other writers as guaranteed to create courage and high moral purpose in its hearers and its music is consistently recommended for leading young men into war.

Unquestionably there is an inspiring quality in the tones of certain instruments, such as the trumpet, but to credit each interval of the scale with an ethical significance hardly seems logical. What few examples of Greek music have come down to us are absolutely at variance with the literary accounts of their significance. Their melodies are crude and incoherent; they show no originality of rhythmic pattern, and only a limited conception of harmony.

But it is quite easy for the Greek musician to have argued, as the ultra-modernist argues, that certain effects have an absolute significance, which should be quite clear to every listener. If the musical expressionist strikes clusters of tones at random and labels these with all kinds of abstract titles, who shall argue with him? We can only say that his music does not mean to us what it evidently means to its composer. But the final test of all art is its ability to transfer the emotions of

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its creator directly to some sort of audience. If this were not so, then any child beating upon the keyboard of a piano could well claim to be expressing abstract feelings of joy, and any vandal flinging a pot of paint at a canvas could label the result a study in animal energy. This perfectly simple criterion of appreciation is consistently overlooked by the half-baked enthusiasts of modernism, who take the word of any æsthetic charlatan as to his intentions and hypocritically agree that what they are observing is Art with a capital A.

Unquestionably traditions have grown up about certain pieces of music which have helped them to produce absolute effects, ethical and otherwise. And there was something more than mere tradition in the response of various Frenchmen to the "Marseillaise," "Ca Ira" and the "Carmagnol." "Dixie" has more reasons for its popularity than the mere habit of applause and cheers.

On the other hand, is there anything essentially touching in the melody of "Home, Sweet Home," which Robert Louis Stevenson described as "wallowing naked in the pathetic"? Is it not rather a matter of association which has similarly glorified the ribald strains of that old English drinking-song, "To Anacreon in Heaven," into the dignified national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner"?

The more primitive the race, the easier it is for its artists to impose upon the average mind a foregone æsthetic or ethical conclusion. When the Indian medi-

cine-man decreed "This is a war dance" or "This is of religious significance," or "This has to do with the harvest," his word was law, and the music permanently assumed this artificial meaning.

Lullabies of every kind have consistently put babies to sleep the world over, and unquestionably "Frankie and Johnnie" would be quite as effective for the purpose as "Hush-a-by, My Darling," "The Sandman," or any other jingle made potent by association.

Bugle calls in the army acquire such a definite significance that even horses respond to them. Practically all sacred music is rooted in a similarly didactic tyranny. College and school songs have their fixed traditions, and once these are thoroughly drilled into the students there is no escape from their absolute import. There are occasions when it would be rank heresy to sing "Old Nassau" or "Bright College Years," and Yale's exact timing of the famous "undertaker" song has actually turned defeat into victory by the mere force of psychology. Princeton and Harvard men are as fearful of that portentous, long drawn note as the veriest voodoo-worshippers, and hysterically try to drown it out with their own noise whenever it floats across the gridiron.

Since practically all "program" music secures its effects by prearrangement, it is all the more to the credit of a composer when he creates, by "absolute" means, a mood of practical inevitability. This has actually been accomplished again and again by all the truly great

musicians of the world in the ineffable calm of their symphonic slow movements, in the rhapsodic utterance of a finale, in the joyous lilt of a scherzo, without recourse to words, program or label of any kind. When the listener hears such music, he is never in doubt as to his response. It was Fritz Kreisler who said, with homely truth, "After all, you know, it is great art only when it raises goose-flesh."

Unfortunately, the more difficult it is to produce these absolute effects and reactions, the easier it is to announce them in advance. In general it has been a rule that the composer with the most elaborate intentions has been the least able to carry them out.

The music of India is perhaps as elaborate as any in the world in the subtle and complex associations built around its materials. Yet the materials themselves are deadly dull and frightfully monotonous after the first impression of novelty has worn off. All such oriental music can be made temporarily effective by careful showmanship and exotic staging, particularly if all the hidden meanings and mystical traditions have been clearly pointed out in advance. But its direct appeal is exceedingly limited beyond the circle of the faithful initiates.

There are oriental wind instruments which produce weird noises, piercing in quality, and certainly not in tune with the civilized scale. But it may have been noted that all bad performers on the clarinet, oboe, etc.,

produce similar noises merely because they are unable to keep to a definite pitch or to control a pleasing tone.

When Ross Gorman played the opening measures of George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" on his trick clarinet, he slid like a calliope up a wailing glissando which most trained players would have found literally impossible, but which represented the deliberate imitation of the savage's imperfect command of intervals and hence the accidental discovery of tones smaller even than a quarter or an eighth. What Gorman did purposely, by a modification of the conventional reeds, the illiterate player of primitive music has always achieved, accidentally, but with blissful unconsciousness of any departure from conventional paths.

The "close harmony" of a negro quartet is often gained by tentative searchings and experimental wanderings of the voices, which, while often slightly out of tune, create all the greater satisfaction when they slide successfully into a chord that actually makes sense. In fact, all dissonances in music serve a legitimate purpose, chiefly in emphasizing the satisfying qualities of recognized chords and intervals.

The evolution of music, with its unswerving fidelity to the law of the survival of the fittest, has emphasized the instinctive response of human nature to certain combinations of tone, and these combinations seem to rest upon purely physical grounds. It can no longer be questioned that art is fundamentally utilitarian, and we



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normally and logically ascribe beauty to that which is primarily comfortable and convenient.

Thus the eye responds to shapes and colors that do not put an undue strain upon it and tolerates clashing dissonances only in so far as they emphasize the restfulness of customary combinations. Thus also the ear finds pleasure in sounds that represent universal habits and are therefore easy to grasp and literally painless. Shrill, raucous, scratching sounds, as well as tones pitched too high or too low for comfort are displeasing to the ear, for merely physical reasons.

There is a rule of physics that regular vibration produces musical tone, while irregular vibration produces noise. This axiom is inevitably recognized by even untrained ears, and quite unconsciously. Even the scientist is unable to count and analyze vibrations except with the aid of special paraphernalia, but his ear is just as sure as that of the layman, whether it is responding to organized or unorganized tone.

Concerning identity of pitch there is usually little argument, and practically every human ear is unerringly aware of musical unison. The interval of the octave is almost as sure to be recognized universally (even though the hearer may not be able to explain his reaction to its peculiar effect of duplicating the tone that is actually twelve half-steps removed from it) and the perfect fifth and fourth are not far behind in their general appeal.

The rest of the chromatic scale is frankly a matter

of habit and convenience, which has assumed its present form after much experiment, with comfort to the ear again the primary consideration. But the interval of the third, even though not quite accurately pitched, from the standpoint of physics, has acquired the significance of universality by custom (it was considered a discord by the Greeks) and now seems a necessary mediant between the first (tonic) and fifth (dominant) steps of the scale.

The natural production of these tones in such an instrument as the bugle, their presence among the overtones of every individual tone, and the complete satisfaction which they give in the combination of the perfect major chord would seem to argue something more than an accidental or a dogmatically forced relationship. Men who are utterly unaware of these universal properties nevertheless respond to them involuntarily; and when they do not consciously find these natural intervals, they try intuitively to approximate them.

All primitive music therefore can be set down fairly accurately in terms of the civilized, tempered scale, and of conventional rhythm. Where the actual results do not agree with these ideals it is merely because of physical and mental inability to carry out obvious and almost inevitable intentions. The habit of singing and playing out of time and out of tune is too common even among the musically literate to be con-

sidered foreign to the most naïve exponents of the art.

The average person singing such a tune as "Old Folks at Home" is quite likely to cut off one or two beats at the end of each musical sentence, merely because the sense of rhythm loses track while a long note is being sustained. In the transcribing of primitive music such aberrations have been solemnly put down as irregularities of rhythm with measures of 3-4 and 2-4 time suddenly and unreasonably inserted in the midst of an obvious 4-4 beat. Similarly certain intervals have been supplied with footnotes to the effect that they should be sung "a little higher" or "a little lower" than the note indicated, with the transcribers evidently quite oblivious to the fact that this was the very note at which the original singers must have been unconsciously aiming.

The writer recently edited a book of American Mountain Songs, and in the course of this work was obliged to take down many melodies directly from the singers, or to correct those which had already been awkwardly and incorrectly transcribed. Invariably when he put down a conventional version of what the music was obviously intended to convey, he would find the singer in complete agreement with this version. "That's it! That's what I meant!" was usually the answer to his own repetition of the tune, done in the orthodox manner.



Gid Tanner, the Georgia fiddler and singer, has actually made phonograph records in which both his sense of pitch and his sense of rhythm have slipped quite noticeably here and there. These slips are accepted as charming touches of naïveté. But why credit this mountaineer with the command of a special scale or the invention of original rhythmic patterns?

The folly of this whole procedure extends beyond the field of music into those of painting, sculpture and even literature. There are artists who deliberately imitate the "primitives'" lack of technique and intentionally ignore correctness of line and perspective, as well as fidelity of color. There are writers who refuse to consider the requirements of the reader and merely set down stupidly and inartistically their incoherent thoughts and words, as a child might scrawl meaningless lines upon a piece of paper.

To admire simplicity of expression and unconscious art, where the limits of technique are obvious, is something quite different from discarding the equipment gradually gathered through a long period of logical development and deliberately returning to a primitive ignorance of such equipment.

There has been entirely too much readiness to credit primitive art with æsthetic beauty instead of the mere historic interest which it obviously possesses. This mistake is made in most textbooks. The symphonies of

Brahms are neglected in order that the earliest musical instruments may be thoroughly described. Great literature has to be content with a passing mention because of the space devoted to hieroglyphics, cuneiform inscriptions, etc. The crude drawings of cave-dwellers are treated with as much reverence as a portrait by Rembrandt. Even in biography the finest achievements of the hero are often subjected to a perfunctory summary, after valuable pages have been expended upon trivial details of childhood and youth.

There are unquestionable climaxes of art, beyond which no achievement is imaginable. Greek sculpture has not yet been improved upon, nor is modern painting necessarily better than the more photographic work of Raphael and other masters of several centuries ago. The ancient temples and medieval cathedrals still stand as monuments of a perfect architecture before which most of the later buildings of the world must bow in shame.

But with an art of such gradual and logical development as music, it seems folly to presuppose climaxes of which history and experience alike give no proof whatever. It is perhaps true that no greater symphonies will ever be written than those of Brahms. It may be that Wagner has sounded the limits of music drama. But these achievements were the normal result of a long and slow growth, as was the organ music of Bach and the piano music of Chopin. Why discount all these lines of development for the sake of assuming

independently a purely imaginary and utterly illogical skill?

Music is an art whose very existence assumes the human equation. There is no musical beauty without a human ear to perceive it. Is it logical to suppose that primitive, untrained, inexperienced ears could demand and receive a music that was actually superior to that of the long line from Palestrina and Bach to Strauss and Stravinsky?

A little thought on the part of the ultra-modern "primitives" will persuade them that they do not wish to be taken as seriously as this. Perhaps they would even admit that they do not consider their own music superior to that of Bach.

Fundamentally, they are merely trying to justify, as art, experiments which thus far seem to have a scientific rather than an æsthetic value. It is interesting to know how many different kinds of noises can be made by human beings, but this knowledge does not necessarily contribute to universal beauty.

The primitive musician has been dragged into the limelight chiefly to prove that the artificial achievements of ultra-modernism are founded upon the truth of human experience. What is actually revealed, however, is an honest but futile groping for those very formulæ that the modernist has discarded as "old-fashioned," an intuitive search for natural laws of melody, harmony and rhythm, whose proper interpretation re-

quired the genius of the musical masters, and whose permanence and universal necessity no capricious distortion or fantastic experimentation has yet been able to affect.

III  
OUR NEW FOLK-MUSIC



### III

#### *Our New Folk-Music*



CONTRADICTION in terms? Perhaps. But what law has ever decreed that folk-music must be old?

The existence of folk-music assumes the existence of a peasantry, and in such countries as Russia and Spain the peasantry are still producing a folk-music of their own. It has remained for the United States of America to present the unique phenomenon of a folk-music created under highly civilized conditions, centuries after the country's birth, but with all the characteristics of a naïvely primitive peasant art. In a word, our new folk-music is jazz.

Kindly omit the premature shudders. The situation is not so hopeless as it may sound. In fact, jazz itself, as they once said of Wagner, is not so bad as it sounds. Be thankful at least that it is our folk-music and not our art-music.

So far as old folk-music is concerned, we Americans have never had any. We cannot claim the music of the Indians as our own, for it existed in this country by a mere geographical accident. We cannot claim the music of the negro, for we imported it from Africa, and it

does not belong to us. We cannot claim the Creole music, which was a combination of French and Spanish influences; and the so-called American songs of the mountains and the plains are mostly English folk-tunes, brought in by those notorious art-lovers, the cavaliers and the convicts. The musical contributions of the Puritans are mercifully forgotten.

Real folk-music rises from the need of a rhythmic accompaniment to manual labor. The Volga Boat Song of Russia is intended to ease the pulling of the boats upstream for the human canal-horses. Every primitive race has had its reaping songs and its threshing songs. Sailors sing chanteys while pulling on a rope, for the sake of rhythmic effort. Soldiers march better and with less weariness to music, and the daily dozen of modern physical culture is best accomplished with the aid of a phonograph record or the strains of the radio.

What began as a merely useful accompaniment to hard work became in time a recreational asset and a cultural pleasure. Then the age of machinery began and folk-music in most cases stopped abruptly. You cannot sing to the accompaniment of a buzz-saw.

Having had no primitive folk-music of its own, because of the lack of a real peasantry, the United States of America attained civilized prosperity and sophistication on borrowed and imitative material. Our talented composers produced music in the German, the French and the Italian styles, of the classic, the ro-



mantic, the modern and the ultra-modern periods, simultaneously, without effort, and also without originality or any distinctively American traits. Even MacDowell, perhaps our greatest composer, was Scotch rather than American in his musical language.

All the folk-music of the world agrees in certain characteristics, of which the most important are monotony of rhythm, simplicity of melody, distinctiveness of tone color and the spirit of improvisation. All of these characteristics are also to be found in the modern popular music of America.

Monotony of rhythm is the very foundation of folk-music, for only thus is its original object of lightening labor accomplished. The fox-trot is the modern epitome of monotonous rhythm.

Keeping time is the first and most primitive musical instinct of mankind. It is the physical response to music, the response of the feet to rhythm. The savage, beating on a tom-tom, has it; the child, running a stick along the palings of a fence, has it; and so have the child's parents, keeping time to a jazz band. They all belong to the great fraternity of foot-listeners.

Simplicity of melody represents the heart-interest in music, and the heart-listeners of the world are also numerous. Fundamentally, the melodies of jazz are naïvely simple. In most cases they are borrowed from the music of the past.

The tone color or quality of most folk-music is

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distinctive even when it rises chiefly from a variety of drums or pipes. The modern jazz orchestra has made a distinct contribution to tone color, particularly in its use of muted brass (trumpets, trombones, etc.) and its emphasis on percussion (drums, banjos, pianos, etc.). Maurice Ravel has called jazz America's most significant music, chiefly because of its characteristic tone color and syncopated rhythms. The effects have been widely imitated by European composers, including the Russian Stravinsky, who has not, however, succeeded as yet in writing real jazz.

As for the spirit of improvisation, it is inherent in the very nature of our popular music. The early folk-singers of the world made up their ditties on the spur of the moment, often with a meaningless burden, or refrain, to be carried by the crowd. Similarly our first jazz bands made up their parts and played entirely by ear. Paul Whiteman was the first leader to insist upon definite notes, so that a piece was actually played the same way twice in succession. To-day jazz has become sophisticated, but the effect of improvisation is still there.

Unquestionably, the new popular music is characteristic of modern America in its restless energy, its essential naïveté, its deliberate distortions and caricatures, its insistence on the obvious, and its occasional vulgarity. But American music is not necessarily condemned forever to such characteristics. The law of evo-

lution has always worked in the past, and musically the survival of the fittest is sure to be asserted once more.

Admirers of folk-song in general forget that for one beautiful melody preserved to-day, a thousand obvious, commonplace, vulgar tunes had to be eliminated by natural processes. This applies to the words as well as the music, and therein lies the real hope for America's art-music of the future.

The conscious, painstaking composers of the world have invariably borrowed in time from the great folk-music. On the same basis, the best elements of the modern jazz will be embodied in a later music which shall be both characteristic and worthy of America.

There are encouraging signs already in the work of George Gershwin. He is the first of the popular composers to show real melodic invention and to free jazz from the fetters of rhythmic monotony. Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" was epoch-making. His piano concerto in F, written for the New York Symphony Orchestra, is probably the most important and certainly the most original piece of music yet produced by any American composer, as the critics will some day discover for themselves. "An American in Paris" could not have been written by any other composer than Gershwin.

There is encouragement also in the work of Eastwood Lane, Henry Souvaine, Deems Taylor, Franke Harling, Eric Delamarter, Ferdie Grofe, Leo Sowerby

and John Alden Carpenter. Some of these are still in the imitative stage, but they are at least trying to be honest and in several cases they have succeeded in being distinctively American.

A few disgruntled scholars have recently launched fresh attacks upon American jazz, chiefly because they are not quite sure of what the term means. Actually jazz is nothing more than a distortion of conventional music, and, like the similar development in other lines of modern art, it may lead to a new and rare beauty if given time to work out its own salvation.

In any case, the law of evolution is inexorable. If jazz is wholly bad, it will be its own destroyer, as always in the past. If there is any good in it, that good will survive. A future generation will be the judges. Meanwhile, does any one seriously believe that the average American is a spiritual æsthete, floating in ethereally precious ideals? Our new folk-music gives us a bluntly truthful answer.

IV  
MUSICAL ADOLESCENCE



#### IV

### *Musical Adolescence*

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#### APPLYING TO ADULTS AS WELL AS CHILDREN

THE path which leads to the enjoyment of good music is necessarily a winding one, for it runs gradually to the top of a lofty mountain. There are some who may grow weary on the way, even though it be made as easy and as pleasant as possible. There are many who will be satisfied to stop half-way or three-quarters of the way up and decide that the view from there is just about the same as if they had reached the peak.

With human frailty thus ever ready to abandon whatever seems to require undue effort, the guide to good music would seem justified in pointing out at every opportunity not necessarily the quickest but rather the easiest and pleasantest pathway to the summit. There are short cuts, of course, but they are likely to lead through rocky and thorny and barren ground, re-

sulting in bruises and scratches and weariness of the spirit.

And even if we assumed the existence of some magic airplane that might whisk the willing traveler almost instantaneously to the top of the mountain, is it not likely that the effect would be merely breathlessness and dizziness, with a consequent sacrifice of all the enjoyment that would have rewarded a slower and more logical ascent to the commanding heights? Mountain climbing is a hazardous sport at best, and sudden changes of elevation and atmosphere may prove disastrous by very reason of their physical or emotional overstimulation.

Continuing the relentless course of the metaphor, is there any real argument against the winding method of ascent, whether it be applied to actual mountains or to the spiritual eminence of music? What if there should be a tendency to linger on the way? What if the road be lined with inviting forest glades and fields of tempting flowers? Is there any harm in straying occasionally among such pleasant surroundings, so long as the general direction is always upward and the road is never entirely lost? Finally is not the work of those who have prepared and pointed out the carefully graded path to musical enjoyment more significant than that of even such technical experts as might discover the hazardous short cuts or invent the breath-taking air-line?

Recreational music and educational music are often



spoken of as though they were two entirely different things. It is assumed, in other words, that we use one kind of music for enjoyment and another for culture. But, are they not essentially the same, and does not their success depend upon an identical basis of psychology?

The successful teacher of music in any line must keep in close touch with recreational principles, particularly in the selection of material. On the other hand, there is no reason why recreational music, as such, should not add significantly to the cultural background of every participant.

In this relationship of the recreational and the educational, adult psychology is a good index to that of the school boy or girl. It has been found that the natural tastes and responses of the average American business man are very much the same as those of the normal High School student, and just as the boy is æsthetically father to the man, so also the girl is mother to the woman. In both cases there are definite parallels of physical, emotional and intellectual reaction.

Our adult population, in fact, has never yet as a whole progressed beyond the stage of a musical adolescence and can therefore be considered in precisely the same light as a more youthful audience. It may be worth while to analyze the commonest musical responses of adolescent humanity, with the possibility of arriving

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 thus at a mutually improved understanding of the situation.

The factors which work toward the creation of beauty in music are as logical in their historic development as in their contribution to individual appreciation. The sense of rhythm inevitably appears first and it is this primitive response to a largely physical stimulus which always requires first consideration in the study of the listener.

It is human nature to like a decided rhythmic emphasis and in general a monotony of rhythm has proved itself strangely satisfying. This is actually all that the savage requires, and the taste of the modern child or adult may not seem far in advance.

For some recreational purposes, such as marching or dancing or the playing of games to the accompaniment of music, a certain monotony of rhythm is, of course, essential. But even such music can be selected with an ear to its melodic value, and an obvious rhythm does not necessarily mean a cheap tune. Schubert, Verdi and other masters wrote sufficiently stirring marches and there is a wealth of wonderful rhythmic material in the great folk-music of the world.

It is always amusing to hear the sophisticated æsthete make patronizing remarks about folk-music. "How delightfully naïve! How charmingly simple!" he exclaims, meanwhile ignoring the fact that this naïvely

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simple material appeals tremendously to his own taste, if he is honest with himself.

Simplicity of melody and clearly defined rhythms are factors in the appeal of great art-music as well as folk-music, and their importance can hardly be over-emphasized in any educational or recreational scheme. The composer of a symphony usually makes his best effect with the melodic simplicity of his slow movement, and there is generally at least one section in which a strongly marked rhythm predominates.

If therefore the musically adolescent adult shows a leaning in the direction of these obvious æsthetic stimulants, why not let him enjoy them? Such a taste is not necessarily limited to cheap and obvious music, even though it may start thus, following the well-known line of least resistance. The melodies of Brahms, Beethoven, Chopin and Wagner will inevitably appeal if they are given the same opportunity as would be afforded to a popular tune. But the choice must be carefully made, and with an honest regard for facts, not theories.

In dealing with melody and rhythm, for adults as well as youngsters, it seems advisable to reduce the material when possible to its simplest terms. An audience unfailingly responds to the analysis of patterns in melody, and it is the conscious or unconscious musical memory that is most easily stimulated in this fashion.

The man who likes "Hail, hail, the gang's all here" is already unwittingly an admirer of Sir Arthur Sullivan,

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who wrote that stirring chorus in his opera, "The Pirates of Penzance." This means that he would also respond inevitably to the similar melodic and rhythmic appeal of Verdi's "Anvil Chorus." From this he could easily step to other pieces of martial music, such as the "Soldiers' Chorus" from "Faust," and the chances are that he is already well on the way to the "Pilgrims' Chorus" in "Tannhäuser" and the "March of the Knights" in "Parsifal,"—in other words, a Wagnerian in the making.

But if this same love of melody and rhythm is fed only with tunes of the type of "Barney Google" and "Yes, We Have No Bananas," the adolescent adult will go wrong musically just as surely as the youngster of the next generation. The recreational success of any kind of music should be a guide to the educator as to the style and mood, but not necessarily an index of actual material.

The phonograph and player-piano merchants have a clever system of selling records by classifying them under the head of "Similar Appeal." Actually such hints to customers have a real educational value, for it is thus that a patron of the obvious can be led involuntarily and quite painlessly to the less familiar and perhaps more significant things of music. It is all a part of the winding system of laying out the pathway up the mountain.

Responding first to rhythm and then to melody, as is true also of the developing individual and of the

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human race in general, the musical adolescent next becomes aware of harmony, and here also it is not difficult to progress from the obvious to the more complex. Once again the adult who begins by enjoying the "close harmony" of "Sweet Adeline" and "Workin' on the Railroad," may advance gradually by way of "Sweet and Low," Pinsuti and Tosti to an appreciation of the polyphonic miracles of Bach and Palestrina. But it would be a mistake to try to jump immediately to a highly technical system of harmonization or to a succession of mere formulas.

To the appreciation of harmonic beauty, as a logical part of human enjoyment, may be added in time a feeling for tone color, easily stimulated by the analysis of instrumental and vocal quality, individually and in combination, and eventually perhaps a fairly intelligent grasp of the essentials of form; for musical form, after all, is not much more difficult to comprehend than form in golf or system in business.

The close observer of recreational music will in time be able to analyze its effects in terms of these fundamental factors of rhythm, melody, harmony, tone color and form, and to apply the results of such observation to the educational repertoire. He cannot and need not assume a technical knowledge of any of these processes, but he may be sure that they will be assimilated in the mere course of listening through that direct and

universal response which has been called "the common sense of music."

If we take care to make our concert programs attractive, we should certainly make sure that our educational programs are equally so. We have the same principles of psychology to consider, and the same potentiality of enjoyment whether the subjects be technically children or adults.

Actually our adult musical life in this country is to-day in an adolescent stage, and the real value of this strange awakening lies chiefly in its sincerity. It would be criminal to endanger realities by the superimposing of artificialities, particularly when these realities may be made more and more significant without any undue concession or lowering of standards. To recreate is just as important as to educate, and in their ideal form the two are fused into a permanently effective unity.

The winding path is not merely pleasant. It is also utilitarian. And though the journey may take a little longer it leads inevitably to the top of the mountain, to that enduring satisfaction which music, of all the arts, can guarantee most faithfully to its loyal followers.



v  
SYMPHONIES FOR BUSINESS MEN





*Symphonies for Business Men*

“WHY do men write symphonies?” asks the Practical Business Man. “There is certainly no money in it.”

You are right, Mr. P. B. M. There is not, never was, and never will be any money in writing those complex yet sublimely simple masterpieces of music.

Men write symphonies for the same reason that they build cathedrals, paint huge, panoramic pictures, fashion heroic groups in bronze or marble. The true creative artist has always the urge to do something in the grand manner, and this applies even to the books, the dramas and the epic poems of the world, many of which are a dead loss commercially.

The best advice to the business man who would like to enjoy a symphony is that he should listen to it in the same way that he looks at a cathedral or a great picture or group of statuary. With a book or a play, it is different, and rather easier. For a book or a play presents only one thing at a time, out of which a complete impression is gradually built up.

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You grasp each line of description or conversation, each bit of action or dialogue, as it comes to your senses, and by the time the book or the play is finished, if it is a good one, you have a vivid knowledge of the characters, the setting and the story. This is a progressive art, and, therefore, the most easily assimilated, and it has the additional advantage that, when the printed word is available, you can go back and refresh your memory, linger over a sentence or a paragraph so as to soak up its full meaning, and even look ahead and cheat yourself by making sure there will be a happy ending.

A piece of architecture or painting or statuary also profits by staying put, and merely waiting for you to look it over, which you can do at leisure, and as many times as you please. But your symphony is not merely progressive, but perpetually vanishing. You have to grasp what you can at a hearing, and, unless you are a trained musician, even the possession of the printed music will be no great help to you.

But just as you will find new beauties every time you look at the cathedral or the picture or the statuary, so you can discover gradually the less obvious details of beauty in a symphony. You cannot completely enjoy or appreciate a symphony in a single hearing any more than you can grasp the significance of a cathedral with a passing glance.

Even the first hearing, however, like the first look, will create a definite impression, and after that it is

merely a question of how many times you are willing and able to return for the limitless development of that first impression.

With visible art, such as painting, sculpture and architecture, the general outlines or subject matter make the first and perhaps the most lasting impression. We remember the arches, the towers, perhaps the great stained glass windows of a cathedral, the figures or outstanding objects in a picture or a piece of sculpture. In a symphony the corresponding subject matter is melody. There are tunes galore in every great symphony, no matter what some people may think or say to the contrary.

Obviously, therefore, the first thing for which a business man should listen in a symphony, as in any other music, is the melody. He may recognize the melodic material for a time only in its clearest and most complete form, but after a few hearings, he will trace it instinctively through changes of rhythm and key, from major into minor mood, and vice versa, and even through various decorations and elaborations, extensions and compressions, all the stock devices for maintaining interest and avoiding monotony.

Like every other artist, the musical composer starts with crude materials (tones and time) arranges them into definite subject matter (melodies) and then develops this by his command of form or "technique." Form in music is very much the same as form in golf.

Essentially it represents the power to secure the greatest results with the least waste of effort. The golfer's raw materials are strength and energy. By developing good form, he sees to it that these materials are not wasted. The strongest or the most energetic man is not necessarily the best golfer.

So with music, the good composer does not waste his melodic material, which represents the strength and the energizing force in his creation. He uses "form" to secure the best final effect with the melodies at hand, and the result is a symphony instead of a mere flow of aimless tunefulness.

A popular tune soon becomes tiresome because it is just the same thing over and over again. The material may be perfectly good, but human nature demands variety, development, form, "technique," before it will be satisfied. The jazz arrangers discovered this long ago, and every one knows to-day that the Whiteman or Lopez version of a popular hit is far more effective than the simple, monotonous melody as it was first written.

Melody is the sticky sweetness of music, the cloying jam which needs a background of nourishing bread before it becomes really palatable. Just as children think they would like to eat jam "straight," and usually grow sick in the process, so many people believe they can live on melody alone, with the result that they also become endlessly nauseated.

The technique or musicianship in a symphony is the

solid, nourishing bread to the jam of its melodies. Without it there would be a mere waste of sweetness, a dripping, wearisome congestion of sticky sentimentality.

The ideals of form in music are fundamentally the same, whether you are dealing with a simple little song or a complicated symphony in four movements. "Unity through contrast" is the goal, and that is really not so paradoxical as it sounds.

The painter has contrasting materials of color and line and he blends them into a final unity in his picture. The architect does the same thing with contrasting materials of stone, wood, masonry, etc. The musician has only tones and time to work with, but he can use a variety of instruments or voices for their expression (thus producing the effect of "color") and he finds tremendous opportunities for contrast in the very outlines of melody, rhythm and harmony.

When Stephen Foster wrote "Old Folks at Home," he unconsciously followed the principles of form, and achieved "unity through contrast." His main melodic idea, which he wants to leave inevitably in the memories of his listeners, is the opening phrase, "Way down upon the Swanee River, far, far away." If you play or sing this, you will notice that it does not come to a complete stop, but demands a repetition, to the words, "There's where my heart is turning ever," etc. Then, to make sure that every one will remember this important line of melody, Mr. Foster goes through it twice more

("All up and down the whole creation," etc.) first with a "half-cadence," and then with a full stop. But this is not a complete song, and so far there is a danger of wearying the listener with the constant repetition of the same tune. Therefore, Mr. Foster hastens to introduce the necessary element of contrast. He does it with the phrase, "All the world am sad and dreary, everywhere I roam," which is absolutely different from what has gone before. Then, as a final reminder of his "big idea," he ends with the original melody, and "unity through contrast" has been accomplished. (The same analysis can be applied to "Drink to me only with thine eyes," and any number of other folk-tunes.)

In a symphony the same thing is done on a far larger scale. To begin with, there are usually four sections, or "movements," each quite different in spirit from the others, although there is probably some consistency of mood or theme, whereby eventual unity is secured.

The first movement is the most important and it traditionally takes the "sonata form," which is also found in the first movements of piano or violin sonatas, or concertos. (A symphony is really nothing more than a sonata for full orchestra, and a concerto is a sonata for a solo instrument with orchestral accompaniment. An orchestra is called a "symphony orchestra" when it is equipped to play any symphony, which means that it must have from eighty-five to one hundred players.)



After the first movement, generally in a broadly heroic style, comes a slow section, full of singing melody, then a lively, cheerful movement, in fast time, and at last a broad, sweeping "Finale," in which the main idea of the symphony is driven home with climactic force.

If the form of the opening movement gradually becomes intelligible, don't worry about the rest of the symphony, for that will be easy by comparison. Listen first for the melodies, pure and simple. You will find at least two in every opening movement, probably of contrasting types. The first will be announced immediately, or after a short introduction. The second appears a little later, and after this comes a period of "development," in which you will probably lose track of both melodies for a time, only to recognize them with all the more pleasure as they emerge again for a final "recapitulation."

It is the "development" or "free fantasy" in a symphonic movement that proves increasingly fascinating to the confirmed music-lover, for this part corresponds to the plot of a play or a story. At the start the characters are introduced in the shape of tunes, and this is called the "exposition," just as on the stage, when (with the old-fashioned technique) the maid dusted the furniture and discussed with the butler the possibility of a reconciliation between master and missus.

Once the main characters have been presented,

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however, the musician's duty, like the playwright's or novelist's, is to entangle them as much as possible and create situations which will leave everybody in the dark as to the outcome. The symphonic composer does the trick by carrying his melodies or "subjects" off into widely different keys, twisting them around, turning them upside down, often breaking them into pieces for the mere pleasure of bringing them together again, handing them over to various instruments or combinations of instruments for experiments in "color," and eventually proving triumphantly that what had seemed absolutely hostile can be made to harmonize beautifully in a final "unity through contrast."

Nobody can expect to follow this process of development right through, least of all at a first or second or third hearing. But each time some new details will become apparent, just as, in the cathedral, more and more of the intricate carving emerges from the gloom at each visit, so that the consistent concert-goer is always saying to himself "Why did I never notice that before?" With a great composer like Beethoven or Brahms, there is practically no limit to the appreciation and enjoyment of detail, after the broad outlines of melody have become thoroughly familiar. When you have reached the stage of listening expectantly for just a few notes from the flute or the oboe or the French horn, as the case may be, and of recognizing instantly



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their significance in the whole symphonic scheme, then you are yourself a creative music-lover.

Here are a few concluding suggestions as to definite things to be heard in particular symphonies, and a logical order of approach. Take Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony" as a starter, partly because of its simple beauty, and partly because it has only two movements. (Several people have tried to complete it, but why put arms on the Venus de Milo?)

At the start of the "Unfinished," you will hear an introductory strain, in minor key, the same tones that were jazzed so successfully to make the chorus of "Limehouse Blues"! Then comes a quivering of the strings, to introduce a plaintive melody sung by the oboe and the clarinet, also in minor key.

The second "subject," in contrasting major mood, is the tune recently made popular as the waltz chorus of the "Song of Love" in "Blossom Time." Since you already know the melody, you may find it possible to follow the various "imitations" which are made to harmonize with it later in the movement.

The slow section starts with an interesting experiment in combining chords, played by horns and bassoons, with short, plucked tones in the bass fiddles, descending the scale with persistent melancholy. The contrast comes in the interruption of a crashing passage, which, however, only serves to emphasize the contemplative calm at the close.

Next you might tackle a modern symphony, such as the "New World" of Dvorák, which was written in America and strongly influenced by negro melodies. You will hear a distinct echo of "Swing low, sweet chariot" in the first movement, and the "Largo" of the second is typically "spiritual," sung chiefly by the English horn.\* In the last movement a slow, minor theme is later made to sound exactly like "Yankee Doodle," by simply increasing the speed and putting it into major key. These things any one can recognize immediately.

If you want to go on, take a Beethoven treatment fairly early. His fifth symphony is his most popular, and always a safe bet, with the simple four-tone pattern of "Fate knocking at the door" providing practically all the material of the first movement. The slow part presents a beautiful melody, with "variations" through which the tune can always be heard. The third movement is in dance rhythm, and the Finale is a stirring march.

You will find Beethoven's seventh symphony predominantly dance music, and the ninth is overwhelming in its introduction of a chorus and soloists in addition to the orchestra. There is also the melodious simplicity of the first and second symphonies, the charm of the "Pastorale," with its cuckoo-calls and realistic thunder-

\* This melody has also become quite familiar with the words "Goin' Home," by William Arms Fisher.

storm, and the magnificence of the "Eroica," dedicated originally to Napoleon Bonaparte.

If you get to like Beethoven, fill in his background with a little Haydn and Mozart, particularly the G minor symphony of the latter, which has "sonata form" in all of its four crystalline movements. Then there is Mendelssohn, with his "Scotch" and "Italian" symphonies, Schumann, with several masterpieces, Goldmark's "Rustic Wedding," and César Franck's in D minor, in which a ragtime Finale echoes material from all of the preceding movements and establishes more than the usual unity.

Tschaikowsky does a similar thing in his fifth symphony, which also has a lilting waltz for its third movement. His famous "Pathétique," number six, presents one movement in irregular five-beat time, uses a rip-snorting march for its third section, and then slumps into a Finale of the most abject melancholy. (Nevertheless, most people seem to eat it up.) His fourth is really his best work, with a highly original "Scherzo" on plucked strings, and a Finale built on a Russian folk-song.

Rachmaninoff has held up the Russian prestige with splendid symphonic works, and there also modern symphonies of merit by Sibelius, Mahler, Vaughn Williams, and the American Hadley.

The climax of all symphonic literature is in the four masterpieces of Brahms, which have never been sur-

passed and probably never will be. Take the second first, as it is the simplest and most melodious. Number one may come next, and you will never grow tired of it. Number three is perhaps the greatest of the lot, and number four will present the biggest problems even for your by this time highly trained ears.

VI

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH MUSIC?



## VI

### *What's the Matter with Music?*

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"SHE'S all right!" rings the stentorian answer from several million throats belonging to Rotarians, Kiwanians, Lions, Gyros, Elks, Masons, teachers, ministers, club women, theatrical managers, musical managers, hotel keepers, movie actors, and dealers in pianos, sheet music and "small goods."

Don't we spend God-knows-how-many millions on music every year, and doesn't that make us the most musical nation in the world? Haven't we more concerts, more conservatories, more radio sets, more phonographs, more player-pianos, more saxophones, more popular songs, more opera deficits, more piano salesmen than any other nation in the world?

What's the matter with Music? Now all together, everybody: "She's all right!"

Why is it, then, that we Americans are actually the most *unmusical* of all civilized white people to-day? While the storm of protest dies down, a collection of facts will be taken.

In a nutshell (short and snappy for "the great

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American Home") the trouble is that while we like lots of things connected with Music, perhaps inseparably associated with it, we don't like Music itself. That is, we don't like it in any but its most obvious, convenient and entertaining forms. Ask any music dealer what is the back-bone of his business in sheet music, player-rolls or phonograph records. The answer will invariably be "Populars!" In the jargon of the trade, there are three kinds of music, "classic," "light classic" and "popular."

"Classics" are sold only to those slightly demented or perhaps hypocritical people who ask for them. "Light classics" represent the acme of good taste, to the sales-person as well as the customer, and fortunately this taste is at least genuine. (A "light classic" may be anything from Cadman's "At Dawning" to the "Poet and Peasant" overture. Dvorák's "Humoresque" is a typical example.)

But "volume," in the music business, means "pops" and nothing else. The hits of the day are the only things that are ordered well in advance by the music shops and department stores, the only things that are honored consistently with special signs for window display, the only things that are played for a customer who indicates no particular preference.

America's enthusiasm for its own popular music (an enthusiasm now shared by the greater part of Europe) is perfectly natural and logical. Also, it is sin-



cere. That is why it follows the normal law of supply and demand. That is why there is profit in the popular music business, and in no other kind.

There are plenty of reasons why America's popular music is and should be popular. It represents the line of least resistance, to which human nature has a permanent and unswerving loyalty. It is the most obvious of all our music, therefore, the easiest to assimilate in one or two hearings and the quickest to become embedded in the memory. (Also the quickest to be thrown out of that same bed, to make room for a rival.)

In all matters of art, we are inclined to like the things we remember. Theodore Thomas (and many others) summed it up in the axiom: "Popular music is familiar music." The Carnegie Hall audience applauding the opening bars of a familiar encore does so not because it likes the music but because it is pleased at having recognized it.

Aside from its obviousness, however, popular music has a utilitarian significance. It is the necessary accompaniment to ballroom dancing and this comes under the head of exercise, social intercourse and what Mr. Macfadden would call "sex life." The most commonplace tune will serve as a vehicle for the monotonous foxtrot rhythm, and our jazz experts can dress it up so as to make something immensely stimulating and provocative out of an infinitesimal melodic invention. Any music that can make human feet keep time has its

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obvious uses, and the foot-listeners of mankind are still in the great majority, just as they were when primitive homo sapiens beat upon a tom-tom and was æsthetically satisfied.

But there is more to our popular music than the mere utility of rhythm. Automatically, it creates conversation and becomes a boon to inarticulate souls struggling to establish their animal superiority. The wisecracking lyrics of Broadway furnish the flapper and the cake-eater with racy expressions which in some way assume the credit of originality when uttered in time with the music. Thus can our younger set, with perfect propriety, utter sentiments concerning the hotness of their passions, their abilities in the arts of intimacy, and the exact or potential relations of "sugar daddies," "sugar mammas" and "sugar babies," which they either could not or would not dare express in ordinary English prose. It all makes for quick understanding and mutual sympathy in the moron temple of life.

Whatever the reasons, the firm hold of popular music on our affections is indisputable in the face of cold statistics. At an optimistic estimate, one per cent of the American population is honestly interested in good music ("classics" and "light classics" combined). The other 99 per cent are honestly interested in popular music. The whole problem of making good music popular, therefore, becomes one of gradually equalizing these

percentages. After about fifty years of wasted effort, this process is just beginning, through an elaborate and partly conscious machinery which may yet turn us eventually into an adequately musical nation.

Meanwhile there is a variety of handicaps and natural hazards to be overcome. Handicap No. 1: People have always been told that they "ought to like good music." It has been presented to them as a duty rather than a pleasure. Symphony orchestras and municipal opera companies have been established on a foundation of civic pride, and have flopped accordingly. The result of this traditional "duty complex" has been that a large percentage of the potential music-lovers of the country resented or even despised the "classics" and flocked to the forbidden fruit of "vulgar jazz," while an equal percentage of those who posed as actual music-lovers were completely hypocritical and merely developed an artificial taste as an accepted and inevitable part of the social veneer.

Handicap No. 2: Since the percentage of those honestly interested in good music as such has always been almost minute in the average American community, some substitute had to be found for creating at least a semblance of musical enthusiasm. That substitute offered itself readymade in the combination of "personality" with spectacular publicity. The musician (and the interpreter rather than the composer) soon took the place of music itself in the minds of the

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American public. This tendency has gone so far that in some of our schools to-day "appreciation courses" consist of the lives of great musicians and personal notes on the recording artists of the day, collected with the help of local music dealers.

In the concert field the glorification of the interpreter has created a virtual monopoly, so that not more than a dozen performers have the necessary "name value" to draw a good-sized bona fide audience, at regular box-office prices, in practically any part of the country.

The concert managers have built up this "name value" at the cost of all possible interest in music itself and the resulting deadlock has literally killed the goose that laid the golden eggs, so that each season the booking of all artists throughout the land becomes increasingly difficult. By virtue of the monopoly of public attention, such great drawing-cards as McCormack, Kreisler, Paderewski, Galli-Curci and Jeritza can be and are quoted at almost prohibitive prices. A local manager must make a huge investment to secure such an artist for a "course" or an individual concert. Even if the public responds to the lure of the highly advertised personality, there will be little money left for other musical events. Cheap and often inadequate performers have to be engaged, and even when these are thoroughly worthy artists in every way, there may be no audience for them. The local manager is left to choose between

risking all available funds in one big splurge (which may or may not pay for itself) and spreading them out among less known performers, none of which can actually be guaranteed to draw a crowd.

✓ The monopoly of the concert field by personalities led directly to Handicap No. 3,—the puerile character of the average program. Even in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Boston, the "big artists" seldom deviate from a stereotyped repertoire. They know why their audience has assembled, and they take no chances of losing any popularity by introducing something too far off the beaten track.

The result is that the so-called "musical public" is fed up with a consistent line of "sure-fire stuff." Pianists give them Chopin and the Schulz-Evler Blue Danube. Violinists toy with the Kreisler transcriptions and reach their serious climaxes in the Devil's Trill and "Souvenir de Moscow." Coloratura singers specialize in the Romeo and Juliet Waltz, "Il Bacio" and the Mad Scene from "Lucia." Other singers lean heavily on "The Year's at the Spring," half a dozen pet operatic arias, and trifling encores in which acting can be substituted for vocalism. Under the circumstances who can be blamed for thinking that the musical chicken consists of a neck and a pope's nose?

Unfortunately the habit of obvious programs has spread even to the less known performers, who feel that their reputation and popularity are still to be achieved,



and that any false step would be fatal. Those who have had the courage to announce an original and interesting program have actually lost ground by the step, for the American public has been carefully trained to think of music in terms of the artist, not the program, and the thought of taking a double chance is literally too much.

Thus the concert audience is handicapped in both its physical and its mental or spiritual growth. Being fairly familiar with a limited number of pieces, it is not interested even in these, except when they are given a sensational performance.

The vast throng that may occasionally gather for a big name is, of course, not strictly a concert audience at all. Its psychology is the same as that of a World's Series or a Dempsey fight crowd, the mere search for a new sensation, stimulated by melodramatic publicity. The fact that the sensation happens to be a musical one has little or nothing to do with the case.

Since the real concert audience of America is so limited in size, the number of performers available in that field rather loses its significance. Amateur listeners are at a premium to-day, but professional artists are a drug on the market.

Their problem also becomes more difficult each year. The demand for their services becomes less and less, while the competition has assumed terrific proportions.

If all the available professionals were scattered

through the country, settling in the smaller cities and teaching, with occasional concerts thrown in, it would unquestionably be of tremendous help to America's musical well-being. But most of these professionals feel that they cannot afford to do this. They must live in New York, or even abroad, and appear in the provinces only "on tour" (a farcical term in its general application).

To a certain extent they are right, too, for in some subtle way a musician becomes "local" as soon as he is definitely settled in any place outside of New York. He may be respected, and he can get plenty of pupils, but he no longer commands a paying concert audience. In many American communities there are actually first-rate musicians who should be heard frequently by their neighbors for the good of their taste, but who are consistently ignored in favor of the visiting celebrities.

Here enters the final and most insidious handicap to our musical progress. The leaders of local enthusiasm are invariably divided into cliques and factions which boycott each other's activities and deliberately refuse any concerted support except where the success of a concert is almost automatic.

If there were any real coöperation in the little band of local amateurs and professionals, club leaders and habitual Patrons of Art, every community could sustain a healthy musical life. But the best music teachers are almost always bitter enemies. The rival clubwomen

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hate each other and all their works, while the newspapers and music stores definitely take sides and keep the cauldron boiling.

All of this brings us back to the original proposition that America is not sufficiently interested in good music as such. The indictment applies to the professional performers and teachers as well as to actual and potential listeners. They are all using a great deal of energy in some direction, but it has very little to do with music.

The "artists" have traditionally surrounded themselves with a veil of mystery (which is one reason why they cannot afford to become "local") and most of this mystery is, of course, pure bunk. Their efforts are mainly directed toward preserving the mystery and "establishing personality."

The aloofness of the skilled performer, combined with the intolerance of self-constituted critics, scholars and musical highbrows in general, may be held largely responsible for the modern jazz craze. The contempt of the exclusive musical set for anything short of their own standards has driven the average listener, and particularly the hard-boiled business man, to the level of the obvious, and kept him there. He has been allowed and even encouraged to say, "I guess that classical stuff is over my head," and so he stubbornly goes on saying it. And when some mistaken enthusiast assures him that he possesses an instinctive love for a Bach fugue, and



tries to prove it, the matter is in no sense remedied.

For a nation which has shown itself so canny in its business dealings, we are strangely naïve and impractical in our music affairs. We waste time and money in absurd experiments which are obviously foredoomed to failure, but refuse to support what might be both an artistic and a financial success, again chiefly because of a fundamental ignorance of music itself.

We allow our music teachers to fill the minds of their pupils with fantastic dreams of a triumph which is automatically impossible, and continue to push half-baked performers upon a professional stage already overcrowded.

The athletic coach in an American school or college would not dream of seriously urging his pupils to adopt a professional athletic career. His job is to give them habits of physical health which will keep them fit throughout their lives.

Yet the music teacher, with a smaller and less lucrative field than that of professional athletics, encourages any more-than-average talent to "go in for a career." As a result, the very ones who should be developing into good amateurs and therefore even better listeners, are struggling with the problems of professionalism, eventually becoming, at best, the tradespeople of their art.

Meanwhile the home performance of good music, for the sake of pure enjoyment, has almost ceased in

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America (which was always far behind the European countries in this respect) while there is also a steadily decreasing interest in choral societies, perhaps the surest index to the true enthusiasm of a community for music. A mixed chorus can be kept up nowadays only through a leader's individual personality. Some one is needed who can crack jokes with the ladies and make rehearsals a social success, quite aside from any ability with the baton.

In a business-like country, one would think that the members of the music business would be actively concerned with the business of music. In most cases, however, they are studiously kept out of the picture. Local music-lovers are willing to take their money toward deficits, and local newspapers are glad to run their advertising, but beyond this the tradespeople of music are generally left out in the cold. (And in too many cases they are entirely content to remain there.)

For some unexplained reason, journalism approves of mentioning every kind of automobile by name in the news columns, but the name of a piano in a concert review is anathema, and while it is perfectly proper to encourage an enthusiasm for music, it is "commercializing oneself" to suggest that some one ought to buy a piano. Even to-day it is scarcely realized that no pianist can attain even average success without the definite support and coöperation of some piano manufacturer.

Nor does the public realize that the music critic is

essentially the creation of the concert manager. He insists upon having his concerts "covered" by some one able and willing to sign a name to the review, and he will risk an occasional roasting in order to gain the prestige of praise from one who often becomes an authority by virtue of a signature alone. If the newspapers applied the strict rules of "reader demand" to the space devoted to music, there would be no music critics. At that, the successful ones have always been primarily reporters and secondarily musical authorities.

Here we are, then, a country honestly keen about popular music, and actually producing a popular music which has been hailed by other countries as our most significant contribution to musical literature. Potentially we may be just as keen about music that is less obvious and more permanent, and we shall have a chance to prove this in the future.

Meanwhile the machinery of radio and phonograph and player-piano and theater and church and school is grinding out a new system, in which music itself, not its accessories, will be the chief interest. If this inarticulate taste is thus far naïve and primitive, it is founded upon sincerity, and this provides the one and only ray of optimism for our musical scene.

Our public schools are gradually realizing their responsibility to young musical America and giving the children a chance to hear plenty of good music instead of frightening them away from it by technical formulas

and the dull horror of biographical data. School bands, orchestras and glee clubs afford an opportunity for the gifted ones to play the game of music with as much fun and prestige as if it were some form of athletics.

A new system of class piano instruction is proving successful, not with the intention of developing extraordinary talents, but to give all those who wish it a definite conception of what piano-playing really means, for the eventual appreciation of masterly performance.

While the individual recital is rapidly becoming a dead issue (except for the spectacular star appearances which are not really concerts at all) some of the best performers are finding their way into the motion picture theaters and vaudeville houses, where a readymade audience proves quite responsive to any musical test that is not too ambitious. The combination of these and other factors is at least encouraging honesty of opinion, which heretofore has been completely neglected.\*

It may be that we shall never be a truly musical nation. It may be that we are inherently limited to the obvious, the commonplace and the vulgar in art. It may

\* Since these lines were written, the development of the "community concert plan" has provided further cause for optimism. This practical method of creating an audience in advance of actual concerts, by simply forming an association, bound together by the sincere desire to hear some good music, and engaging as many and as fine performers as the budget of the annual dues will permit, may turn out to be the life-saver of America's musical activity. Now that it has the concerted support of the nationally recognized managers, through the "Community Concert Corporation" of New York, this plan seems headed toward permanent success.

also be that these cheap manifestations of public taste are but the preliminary to a far more worthy discrimination of the future, following the old law of the survival of the fittest, and that after the elimination of the trivial and useless elements (according to the process of all folk-music) our modern jazz will eventually produce a beautiful yet characteristic American music.

The cheer-leader's question concerning Music herself may still be answered "She's all right," but with a qualification for most critics, scholars, artists, managers and music teachers: "They're all wrong!"



VII  
THE ARTIST AND HIS PUBLIC





## VII

### *The Artist and His Public*



#### AN INQUIRY INTO MODERN ÆSTHETIC PROBLEMS

NO art can exist without a public. For art is nothing more than the attempt of one human being to transfer his or her personal emotions to others.

The conscious or unconscious ideal of every artist is to express an abstraction in concrete terms. Since the abstraction exists only in the artist's personal experience, the object becomes merely that of making other people see or feel things as the artist sees or feels them.

The human equation is inevitable in art, just as it is inevitable in any conception of beauty. A sunset, without a human eye to enjoy it, is nothing more than a natural combination of various kinds of matter, involving light, heat and vapor. Viewed with human appreciation, it becomes a mass of gorgeous color.

Beauty itself can be defined only in terms of the individual. John Keats formulated the poetic definition:

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty,”—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

But Pontius Pilate asks the eternal question, “What is Truth?” and gets no answer, even from the wisest Man in the history of the world.

Philosophers beg the question by simply saying that Truth is the agreement of Appearance with Reality, which leaves Reality still a complete mystery.

Only the individual can decide whether, to him, a thing is beautiful or not. “If it be not fair to me, what care I how fair it be?” And only when enough time has passed to create something like a consensus of opinion, can permanent beauty be definitely established. A classic is a work of art whose beauty is permanently established, not by critical verdict, but by the recognition of a vast and generally untrained public.

The creative instinct is common to all mankind, but it is only when this instinct is formulated into recognizable methods of expression that its product becomes art.

Anybody can be aware of an abstract emotion. But to make others share this emotion requires not only some means of communication but a recognizable form, whose elements are a normal part of human experience.

This necessity leads to a practical definition of art as “the organization of common materials toward beauty.” It is the ability to organize such materials that

determines the artist's command of "form" (an elusive yet definite and necessary term in æsthetics).

Every art has its own distinctive materials, even though in some cases combinations are possible, which draw simultaneously upon several arts (as in opera, ballet, etc.). The materials of the musician are sounds. (It is proved by the very laws of vibration that unorganized sound is mere noise.) The materials of the painter are colors, to which may be added the lines of the draughtsman. The sculptor works with solid materials, such as stone, bronze or clay. The architect uses building materials of all kinds. The poet, prose writer and orator have only words, written or spoken.

With all of this the background of nature has little to do. If art were only the imitation of nature, as has so often been claimed, then photography and the making of artificial flowers would be the greatest of the arts. Nature enters into art only in so far as it is a part of human experience.

The sounds employed by the musical composer are familiar to the human ear, but not in the combinations which he forms through the organizing factors of rhythm, melody, harmony, etc. The same thing is true of the words of the poet, the colors of the painter, the materials of the sculptor and the architect.

People who are absolutely ignorant of art (and this means the vast majority) have a curious idea of the workings of genius. They imagine a composer as sitting

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at a piano and simply pouring out beautiful sounds from a soul surcharged with emotion. They think of a painter or a poet in the same terms of frenzied and spontaneous creation. Of the "infinite capacity for taking pains," the studied care with which actual inspiration is put into practical form, they have no inkling.

It is this that makes it so easy for charlatans in all the arts to find some sort of public to take them seriously. They claim nothing but an emotion, and who can tell whether even this is honest? If their hideous noises, their absurd splotches of color, their grotesque forms are not only meaningless but acutely unpleasant to the average observer, these "artists" are ever ready with their glib answer. "It means so-and-so to me, therefore it is merely your lack of understanding that keeps you from appreciating my art."

Here is the solution of the whole problem of æsthetic ultra-modernism. If one becomes an artist simply by possessing an emotion, or being aware of an abstraction, then every human being is not only potentially but actually an artist.

In that case, the child drumming lustily and completely at random on the keys of a piano is an artist expressing the joy of life. (The result is not very different from a number of "compositions" that the world is asked to accept in all seriousness.) In that case, a picture results from indiscriminately throwing the entire contents of the paint-box at the canvas. In that case,

Gertrude Stein's rambling incoherencies, representing the dogged recording of every chance thought, is literature of the highest type, and the Da-Da school of drama a divine afflatus.

Throughout the entire history of the world there has been an æsthetic conflict between the substance and the form, and both have had their triumphs. Whenever one was glorified at the expense of the other, however, some absurdity was the result. Pure formalism was hopelessly artificial, but futurism, "expressionism," or whatever one wishes to call an art entirely without rule or form, is just as hopelessly inarticulate.

It is the necessity of conveying an idea that is too often overlooked by the adherents of ultra-futility in art. The great and permanent art of the world has inevitably found a real public in time, and even though many great artists were comparatively unappreciated during their stay on earth, their values were eventually established upon sincere and honest grounds, without question or hypocrisy.

The artist himself, however, has generally had no way of telling whether his work was great or not. He could only know that he really meant what he was trying to express. The unconscious charlatan probably has just as strong a conviction concerning his product as has the genius, who is willing to starve in order to realize his creative ideal. No artist is actually a competent judge of his own workmanship.

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If one recognizes art, then, only as it definitely affects a real or potential public, the final problem is simply that of controlling the concessions whereby the response of that public may be made quicker and more certain, though probably less lasting. It is human nature to follow the line of least resistance, and it is a platitude of æsthetics that the things of immediate appeal are least likely to contain permanence of beauty.

The æsthetic snob looks with contempt upon the quick and easy success of those who frankly cater to the public as they find it, and in general this derision is justified. The history of popular song-writing proves how rapidly this very public turns away from the commonplace and the obvious, which, while enormously effective for a time by reason of its "sure-fire catchiness," creates just as surely an eventual weariness and distaste by reason of the very same qualities that had won instant popularity.

Obvious art, therefore, is bad art, yet human reactions and experience dare not be ignored. It is only the supreme genius who can afford to say "I know that this expresses what I mean, and eventually every one will grasp it."

One reason why much of the ultra-modern art is fairly sure to die an early death is that it takes absolutely no account of its public, and represents a purely personal expression on the part of its creators. But another reason is that these creators actually fear to ex-



press anything already related to common experience, because they insist on being "original" at all costs.

It is this that brings about the hideous cacophonies of modern music, the illogical monstrosities of color, line and form, the refusal to write a straightforward, intelligible sentence. Yet the truly great artists of the world have never worried particularly about being "original." They have unconsciously repeated themselves and echoed the expressions of others. But even while they were using universal materials, common to all human experience, they were placing upon them a stamp of individuality which was unmistakable and permanent.

The tones of the diatonic and chromatic scale, the chords of the tonic, dominant and sub-dominant, the logical intervals which lead to these chords and scales are not matters of accident, whim or caprice. They "click" for all human sensibility, partly by tradition and habit, but partly also by physical laws which are instinctively recognized.

The colors of the spectrum and their various combinations follow similar laws, as do the relationships of light and shade, the perspective of distance, and the forms of outline or solidity. In the plastic arts the comparison with nature is always a possible last resort, and there is justice in the querulous comment of the self-confessed ignoramus, "I don't know anything about art, but this doesn't look *right* to me."

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The insidious danger in much modern art is that it so often contains certain features wholly admirable in themselves, which win the honest approval of other artists and even laymen who are willing and able to overlook the obvious defects because of one or two outstanding merits. Thus for instance there are painters to-day whose conception of drawing is that of a five-year-old child, but whose sense of color is so overwhelmingly impressive as to make their work really significant. There are sculptors who succeed in catching a fleeting impression of motion or emotion and shatter every anatomical truth in the achievement. There are musicians who disregard every precept concerning melody and harmony, but manage to express something through rhythm and instrumental tone-color which is at least realistic, if not beautiful.

All of this workmanship will in time be found wanting, because of its lack of a unified, sustained beauty, just as all the one-sided art of the past is forgotten to-day. Its points of interest, however, are sufficient to keep it temporarily alive, particularly in view of the general hysteria against convention, tradition or rule of any kind.

The pathetic fallacy with most of the up-to-date æsthetic liberals is that they have never taken the time to find out what actually came before all the rules began to be known. The presumable admirers of ultra-dissonant music are almost completely ignorant of Bach,



Beethoven and Brahms (although the composers themselves, if they are sincere, pay honest tribute to these inimitable masters). People without any background of Raphael, Michelangelo, Leonardo or Rembrandt "go in" for extravagances of line and color whose very virtues they are unable to grasp, for lack of standards.

The eternal excuse made for ultra-modern art is that every great genius was misunderstood and criticized in his day. This leads to the assumption that since every great artist has been at some time unappreciated, therefore every unappreciated artist is great.

The obvious oversight concerns that necessity, previously discussed, for a definite form whereby the thoughts and emotions of an artistic creator may with absolute assurance be transferred to a public of some sort. If a self-styled artist does not command such a form or technique, he is actually not an artist at all, but merely an average human being, expressing personal feelings to his own satisfaction and with as much æsthetic significance as that of an infant banging on a piano, scrawling on paper or modeling in the sand.

The technique of art is not the result of individual dictates, but of a universal necessity, establishing the required contact between the artist and his appreciators. The form of the sonata or symphony does not represent the didactic commands of Haydn and other pioneers; rather is it the logical and inevitable method of achieving musical unity through contrast, with proper em-

phasis but not a fatal concentration on those elements which the hearer is likely to remember and recognize.

This element of recognition is most important in all appreciation and enjoyment of art. Up to a certain point it is the dominating influence in the creation of popularity. It has often been said that "popular music is familiar music" and the same axiom applies to other forms of art.

But there is always the danger of too facile a recognition and too easy a popularity, with the inevitable result of æsthetic nausea. All art that strives for quick recognition deliberately aims at a certain amount of reminiscence and this device is almost universal among the successful song-writers, playwrights, novelists and scenarists of the day. But these "artists" are all confessedly working for a lucrative present, not for a reverent posterity.

If great art is composed of generally familiar materials, it is sufficient for a starting-point. The rest depends upon the inventiveness and resourcefulness of the creative artist.

The form alone would be a mere shell. Technique may be acquired, but inspiration is individual and inexplicable. Men have written symphonies and poems and painted pictures which were technically correct, but entirely lacking in the spark of life. Such creators also find it difficult to understand why their public fails to appreciate them.

The whole argument of non-appreciation falls to pieces as soon as the facts are analyzed. The genius who was misunderstood in his day and later recognized was, after all, working with universal materials and in universal forms, even though this may have been overlooked at the time. It is difficult to make the same contention for the heretics of modern art. Their work does not in any way satisfy the definition of "organization toward beauty" and seems primarily a scientific experiment relating to the perceptive powers of the human eye and ear. Its results may be interesting to the statisticians of the world, but not on that account æsthetically satisfying.

Actually the non-appreciation of great art during the lifetime of its creator is distinctly exaggerated. Beethoven, an arch heretic in his day, received plenty of adulation, as did the romantic rebels, Schumann and Chopin. Liszt, by far the best showman of the lot, with a genius for publicity, became a veritable god of music before his life had ended. Wagner also was fully appreciated after his early struggles, and his heresies were a gradual growth, always within the logical bounds of musical form. At that, Wagner bowed repeatedly to the demands of his public. He put a ballet into "Tannhäuser" to please the Parisians, and later he wrote some very bad marches for political reasons.

Brahms had the good fortune to find an early supporter in Schumann and a later fanatic in Hanslick,

who balanced this enthusiasm by attacking Wagner. To-day Brahms is still on his way up toward his rightful place, which every serious musician is now inclined to give him, with no thought of a Wagnerian rivalry, or any other, for that matter.

The simple truth behind all this is that good art *does* assert itself in the long run, and wins permanent recognition, no matter what the individual critics may have said or written for and against it. Sometimes the process is a rapid one; sometimes it is painfully slow. But universal laws are at work, and those laws are an essential part of that phenomenon called human nature.

Whatever is good in modern music, painting, sculpture and literature will survive by virtue of its fundamental agreement with human experience. Whatever is false and artificial, or limited to the experience of its individual creator, will die of inevitable neglect. For art cannot exist without a public.

THE END

















